

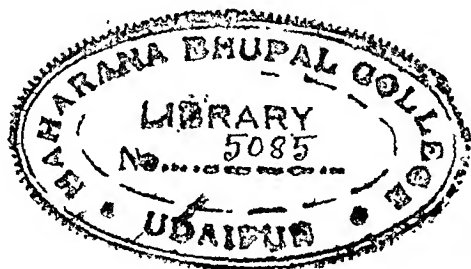
THE 'WEEK-END LIBRARY'

INTERLUDES AND POEMS

# INTERLUDES AND POEMS

*by*

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE



JOHN LANE  
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TO  
CATHERINE

*I have to thank the Editor of The Albany Review for permission to reprint "Blind," and the Editor of The Nation for permission to reprint "Soul and Body," "The Trance," and "Hope and Despair."*

L. A.

1907.

*These poems are reprinted without alteration, except for some correction of punctuation, etc., and a slight revision of the "Ceremonial Ode" and "The Fear."*

L. A.

1928.

# CONTENTS

## INTERLUDES

	PAGE
THE NEW GOD : A MIRACLE . . . . .	I
BLIND . . . . .	37
THE FOOL'S ADVENTURE . . . . .	79
AN ESCAPE . . . . .	115
PEREGRINUS . . . . .	151

## POEMS

SOUL AND BODY . . . . .	189
THE TRANCE . . . . .	193
CEREMONIAL ODE . . . . .	196
"ALL LAST NIGHT . . ."	199
DECEMBER 31ST . . . . .	201
HOPE AND DESPAIR . . . . .	202
"ROSES CAN WOUND" . . . . .	203
THE FEAR . . . . .	204
INDIGNATION : AN ODE . . . . .	205

# THE NEW GOD: A MIRACLE

# *The New God : A Miracle*

## *Persons.*

*Margaret*, a Princess, turned Christian.

*A Prince*, suitor for Margaret }  
*The King* } Heathen.

*Place* : In Paynim, on the extreme coasts of the world.

## *Margaret's Room.*

*M*MARGARET (*alone, singing to her harp*).

Too soothe and mild your lowland airs

For one whose hope is gone :

I'm thinking of a little tarn,

Brown, very lone.



Would now the tall swift mists could lay  
Their wet grasp on my hair,  
And the great natures of the hills  
Round me friendly were.

In vain !—For taking hills your plains  
Have spoilt my soul, I think,  
But would my feet were going down  
Towards the brown tarn's brink.

Is this a sin ? Sure no one but my heart  
Can tell the truth of my longing for the tarn.  
Best pray again, perhaps ; I am tired of prayer.

*The Prince comes in.*

*Margaret.* You !—

Why are you in my privacy ?

*Prince.*

Sweet, pardon ;

Your father gave me leave to you.

*Margaret.*

He has

Invented a new plague then, you ?

*Prince.*

He knows

I love you——

*Margaret.*      And he looks to work your  
love

Upon my soul tormenting, as he swears  
To work his wheels and pincers on my flesh ?

*Prince.* The fierce old man your father spake  
me then,

Not sweet maid Margaret.      Why are you  
grown

Unkind to love ? I come to take you hence.

Soon as I heard the King to this sad isle

Had forced you, hastily and alone I followed.

O, I will never use horse so again !

And I was wondering, all the time I rode,

How I could bear to cripple him, my best.

But there was nothing in mine ears but wings

Of a buzzing fear, and I was stung in the soul

Poisonously by a breese, infecting me

To fever with its fed offal,—noisome talk,

Rank common news of you,—dear Heaven, of  
you !

Of your new faith, and of your dungeoning here,  
Your father's loathing ; but the worst was, none  
For certain knew whether the shivering death,  
The only thing alive in these rotten fens,  
Had laid his nasty hand on you. But now  
You'll come with me out of this misery.

Nature lies down a lazar here ; the air  
Is rank with her disease, and the brass sun  
Cannot be virtuous to the sodden land.

All day there is no little noise of life,  
The green is only wickedness of a fester.

You are of the hills : will you not see how wrong  
To give such a life as yours to the waste swamp ?

*Margaret.* What help for me ? Is not this  
my father's house ?

*Prince.* Yes, and an ill one ! As I took the  
broken causey,—

That seemed a mouldering spine across the marsh,

An old thrawn death, unsepulchred, of a dragon,—  
In the half-light the low unshapen heap  
Lookt like a sleeping effct in his form  
Among the lifeless bogs, hating the world,  
Immemorially alone,—the son, I thought,  
Of these green bones I tread on ; a dull sea moaned  
Along the mudflats, as he yearned in dreams  
To be less loathly. These earth-built walls  
Keep not the evening fogs out, but they crawl  
Through crevices and dim the candle flames,  
And hang like aguish dreams about your bed.  
O, are you shivering ? Am I too late ?  
Come back with me to the salt sunny sands,  
The upland winds, the rains, and valley mists,  
And pines.

*Margaret.* You could have moved me once.

*Prince.* Not now ?

Did that wild wizard whom your father killed,  
Who taught you how to make his love turn hate,  
That Christian whose loose lore is so unkind,

Rank common news of you,—dear Heaven, of  
you !

Of your new faith, and of your dungeoning here,  
Your father's loathing ; but the worst was, none  
For certain knew whether the shivering death,  
The only thing alive in these rotten fens,  
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*Margaret.* You could have moved me once.

*Prince.*

Not now ?

Did that wild wizard whom your father killed,  
Who taught you how to make his love turn hate,  
That Christian whose loose lore is so unkind,

Teach you to hate the earth,—larch-woods when  
spring

Flings on them sudden green, and the high heaven  
Is blue behind ?—or plough-fields when the share  
Turns the good-smelling soil ? or apple-orchards ?  
Or to hate love ?

*Margaret.* Yes, to hate love and lovers.

But not the earth, I think. And sometimes  
longing

Will come upon me for the open air,  
For sunbeams which no rotting vapours swarm,  
For starry nights ;—grey statues here of fog,  
With held-up arms, guesst by the waving sleeve,  
Stalk round the house all night, whose monstrous  
breathing

Kills those weak-flamed lamps. Often the quags  
Call with a doleful voice, or shake as though  
Somewhat beneath them stirred.—But you, if all  
Who ought to love me hate, why do you love ?

*Prince.* Have you no mirror ?

*Margaret.*

Alas, is it that ?

*Prince.* Come with me now ! Into the hills !

*Margaret.*

The hills !

(I thank thee, God !)—No, friend, and no. But  
you,

Get you among the upland health of our hills,  
That lift above the surface of earth's sound,  
Where the stream's trouble seems a kind of quiet,  
And news of lowland life break up on the cliffs,  
Sheer rampired down to the meads, to nothing  
more

Than spray of noise, so thin,—the valley's mowing,  
Sheep-washing, a white stir, sound weaker there  
Than when a breeze, like a spent bird, his wings  
Shuts, and settles upon the whinberries  
And ligs there, a caress. And take this with you—  
I love you not, and I loathe having loved.

Now go, and quickly. Why does he not go ?

*Prince.* Will you not hear my sorrow first ?

*Margaret.*

I know it,—





*Prince.* But hear a last tale of the Gods we  
loved.

'Twill falter and be wayward ; for my thought  
Is set amid new matters where I go  
Starless and fooled ; as if on a mountain side  
Mist took away the light, and the ground began  
To live beneath my feet and writhe, and boulders  
Knew how to move, and with a soundless gait  
Walkt hulking through the gloom. So shall I be  
In this tale of the ending of the Gods :  
Yet hear me through. It is of you besides.

*[He takes the harp, and speaks upon his  
playing of it, looking to Margaret.]*

I saw you first in the wet primrose-month ;  
With thin white dress and yellow clinging hair  
You seemed to move through the warm drenching  
rain

A cloud slid out of the dawn to roam the hills,  
Forgetting to melt its fleece to shower-drops,  
Still wearing sun it caught an hour ago.

Gods ! that was a maid ye might have loved  
When you were young-limb'd ;—then, for now no  
more,  
I think, for you is pour'd deathless liquor  
When, crowned with festival, the brotherhood  
Of Gods carouses, and Fate bears the wine  
Till in each beaker brimming with red darkness  
Coils and shakes a spirit of golden light,  
Immortal youth, caught from an early sun.  
(Down on to earth the fragrance of the spilth  
Stoopt, and as fire takes hold upon the silver,  
Youth of the Gods did take that early world,  
And the air tasted of Heaven's holiday.)  
But the slave Fate who serves Gods, hating them,  
Visited the lean Hours in that cave  
Where the Gods kept them mewed, brewing of  
Time,  
And found them huddled to their witch-work,  
bought  
Their service, promising they should pour out all

The mischief in their urns of bitter years  
Upon the innocent world. From them he fetched  
Skill'd poison, phial'd cunning, wise disaster,  
Stronger than kind of Gods, and with this stew  
Hemlockt the wine of Heaven, gave them drink  
Age unawares, managing all their nerves,  
Unfitting for rule. Out of their blue halls,  
Out of the morning and the roofless air,  
Out of their ample kingship, they must slink  
Into a burial dark and shameful, far  
From the sun's mastery, and the stare of day,  
Thickets of stars, and windy plains of sky,  
Where slope space reaches the lower lifelessness ;  
Deep overwhelmed in some deaf pond of dull  
Inactive element, that stagnates close  
Against the old and still uncleaned disorder,  
Where the thick cold and slime of ungenerate dark  
Glues up immortal sense and ken divine ;  
Often their drownèd agony shall heave  
Large sobs from under, till the shoulder'd pit

Plunges, the blind cumber of the useless mire ;  
Unpitied doom ; there shall no sight win through  
The blear confusion of that clime to find  
Their deathless dying, nor trust in them, men's  
prayers,

Come to their low disease,—without a heed  
In that forgetful delf swallow'd. Only,  
When with a golden footing on the seas  
Summer goes forth, and tranced waves follow her,  
Talking their wide blue meanings at her heels  
Murmurous, or lift white kisses to her ankles,  
Now for the morning fisher-fleet that rows  
To take the freak-backt mackerel, an acre  
Threshing with plenty, silver'd with playing sides,  
It shall not be for ease amid the toil  
Of oars and seine to join in the old catch  
Lifting their thoughts to the unlabour'd ones :  
“ Sing, brothers, sing : for in the middle bay  
The gannet stoop upon the silly crew ;  
Behind the shoal the leaping porpoise prey,

And we shall hawl a many fish to-day ;  
But this large weather the Gods share with you :  
Be happy, for the good Gods are happy too.”  
Not June, but the black nether winter is  
Henceforward the Gods’ long season. Spring,  
The same young mad amazement, shall begin ;  
But there will be a want in Aprils now,  
And when the neighbours greet, it is not thus :  
“ Are not the Gods down here to-day ? You know  
There is no greenness up in Heaven, they say.  
But it is best, these days, even if one  
Have the dawn for a place, and the winds for roads,  
To be afoot on grass. And I dare swear  
The cuckoo-flower down in my water-meadow  
Has made a test of whiteness for the side  
(In Heaven unquestion’d) of a goddess young.  
And see the light upon the cowslip-brede ?  
One of our worships hath his deity  
Put off there, for that beauty seemed enough  
Endowment for one being ; what makes a god

They have, the flowers ; he'll take it back ere noon ;  
Meantime, 'tis in my field. Ay, all the herb  
Is fresh from the treading of some holiness."

But no such visitings now ; and we shall know  
Dimly 'tis ill with the Gods. Yea, though the hutch  
And stifle of their piteous school lies where  
Our day shows but a little cloudy wheel,  
Their grief shall come between the sun and earth,  
A hint of shame dissolved in the golden light.  
And soon our prayers, into the yards of Heaven  
And awning-coolth that flatters o'er them coming  
With reverences ready, are taken there  
In desolateness, come whimpering back to us,  
Unentertained ; for no blithe speech of the Gods  
Heard they along the passages of Heaven.  
And if some, bold with the much need they carry,  
Search and cry for the Gods, they'll find them fought  
With sickness, held down as if knelt upon,  
Over their beauty hateful pain written  
Slandering,—ay, that beauty which aloft

Crowned the world's beauty striving up like fire  
Away from coals and dross, till in the Gods  
To pure flame won, golden, not mixt with time,  
That beauty killed and turned to dingy tarnish.  
Whose were the arms that late managed the sun,  
The hands that could have jarred the starry gear ?  
The Gods' ? but soon they'll have too weak a scope  
To daunt the plagues sordid like flies about them.  
Destiny is an older thing than Gods :  
When that blind power abhors them, they are  
naught.

So now ; and from her house in the night she has  
Let loose the living storms there denn'd, uncaged  
The wings of blights, unstabled pests of demons,  
Enlarged new spawn from out the breeding deep,  
All to harm the good Gods. See you not now,  
Watcher on Heaven's tower, dun afar off  
Strange horrible weather smoking into the light,  
The muster of her swarms ? 'Tis she has sent  
A siege to Heaven, vext already and scared.



Flights of insolence, pester of wild ghosts,  
Tongue-still'd over the walls with moony stare  
To gnarl upon the session of blencht Gods,  
Ring their fear with a hedge of gleeful faces,  
Mocking silently. This is for Heaven ; but  
earth

Has too their practice, as that some in flesh  
Must sheathe the broad destruction of their vans,  
Fold up the hovering of fledge iron noise,  
Case their claw'd hatred smoothly, lodge in souls  
Human their purposes. And one, the worst  
Whelpt in the cellars of destiny's lone house,  
Chose this slim beauty, wherein our quick Truth  
More native than in sunlight seemed, this girl  
As shed for his rough horror. Who dare think  
Her voice now does to cover a fiend's bleating ?—  
That body which I love so well is now  
An inn of villainy for Gods and men ?

Ah, Gods ! Last year perhaps a certain scorn  
Took you, when leaning o'er men's business

Down from your builded privacy. How blame  
The poor deluded Gods, so wholly at ease ?  
But now there is a labour and a sweat,  
Panting, despair, ready for you,—a hunt  
Now straining at you, soon to be unleased,  
Gaped throats, fangs unlipt, many-footed fear.  
Here's one will clap her hands, here's one will  
laugh

At that day's sport, when from the opened gloom—  
The low, slough-moated mews of natures bad—  
Out of their famine leaping come Fate's dogs  
To pull down Gods in the white day ; for still  
Some keen permitted Evil o'ertakes Good.  
The kennelled Evil howls and hungers long,  
But Good at last is thrown among the jaws  
As carrion to be scavenged up by Evil,  
And the wincing air, (so rumour'd of that greed)  
Peals to beast-laughter. Here's one will laugh  
with Evil.

Ah, but my heart, my heart, is it so well ?—

These hides, mudded from lairs in the bottom-  
world,  
Pitching a tented doom round Heaven town  
Of wicked reek, that throws, so wide it is,  
A tawny malady on the white streets ?—  
These swift clemm'd curses having leave to hound  
Divinity ?—they all enlargement get,  
But cover is the thing for Gods, to whom  
All question is the day, unanswerable.  
Which of them ever thought to have a need  
Of Death ?—the famous frequent roads he hath  
made  
Downwards, the gates that shut out noise,—a  
jest  
In Heaven. “Not for us,” they said ; and still  
The darkness Death has built around his rest  
Is nowhere hinged for them, and the main roads,  
So straight and easy trodden of us men,  
Slide from the feet of Gods, bewilderment ;  
No alley goes to refuge from the mouths :

Only for them is shelter in the wide  
Flat unseen marches of nonentity,  
The unmeasured place, where Wisdom never  
comes,  
And Power sickens, failure, and all unhealth ;  
To lodge with half-made things, forgotten stuff  
That should be dead but lives unkind, crude  
fleshes  
Unkneaded into form, or if in form,  
Infamous, ribaldries of the Power that makes.  
They are among the vermin, none so worthless  
As these new sins, the Gods ; themselves un-  
changed,  
But that unsensed outer Mood, beyond  
This round of causèd things (yet all within  
As air is in the flame), changed. The event  
Of its Existence flows away from them,  
A tide pouring into new Law, and they  
Are left behind, shipwreckt in the dark,  
Sunder'd from any voice of the living waters,

Deserted by their holiness, sifted out,  
Drained off like lees, they who once were Heaven,  
Become suddenly bad and the waste of the world,  
Given to the unspeakable murder of old hell.  
And nevermore their hair shall feel the stir  
Of fellowly winds, nor see they blue again.

But Fate, enfranchis'd from the Gods' good rule,  
Now gets to work. Now what the Gods would  
make

Of Man shatters, the subtle singleness,  
The new rare thing their skill, spanning all life,  
Had sometime won from its diverseness, as we  
From many wires a tune ; and though Man stopt,  
In divine memories had linger'd on  
That wonder of humanity, at last  
A just psaltery, toucht into a song.  
Fate with malicious fingers breaks the intent,  
And 'tis enough for him if the poor ado  
(So close to the dirt now) of life's multitude  
Make him a foolish, cruel, useless game.

Destiny made all bad, ugly : the Gods  
Came, and with craft fashion'd her thought to good,  
Earth and men's minds ; they go, these Gods,  
and all  
Slips back to its old rankness, earth and men's  
minds.

And does this gladden Margaret ?—she whose  
eyes,  
As open pools, in the grey hour before  
Morning, expect the day and wait, assured,  
To have their patient ken fill'd up with blue—  
Waited for wonder and the fearful joy  
When she should meet One at a riding's turn  
Long known in worship darkly, while the green  
wood,  
Sacred of Him like burning, thrilled and glowed  
A temple of emerald flame around.—But then,  
That curst old man, that Christian !

*[He drops the harp.]*

Ah, Margaret,

Although your use is to turn mankind from gods,  
I yet must love you. Ay, now I see you here  
Pale, slender, hunger-eyed, in this mean room,—  
Ah, what hath blent the morning in your eyes?—  
My love is fiercer grown. Come to me, love!  
Although you hate my gods, remember love.

*Margaret.* Remember love? Ah, but when I  
left you

There was something rended in my breast, that still  
Aches,—as you know a wound that has catcht cold  
Will keep all nerves astretch upon sense, quivering  
In subtle shifting harmonies of pain.  
So that rude snatch did play upon my heart-strings  
And still they tremble to the same dull tune,  
And still the same loud pain is going through me.  
But yet I may not hate my grief. They say  
God loves a soul all anguish.

*Prince.*

Does he so?

Loves he mine then, think you?—and belike  
When he has gotten lordship wide enough

He'll make the world all anguish, and then love it ?  
Is it a good thing to be loved by him ?  
And when he has finisht hunting our poor Gods,  
And when his hounds, his pack of merciless Hours,  
Have got them down, he'll love them in their pain ?  
This is a god to worship, who loves anguish !

*Margaret.* Why do you stay here ?

*Prince.* I must have your love.

I will not take your mild unheartfelt No.  
There is an insane thing struggling in me,—  
I know it not, but it is stronger than I.

*Margaret.* There's many more will love you,  
for you are  
(Forgive me, God !) most beautiful. For me,  
I have a lover—but you would not understand.  
Enough I cannot love you. Go, beseech you.

*Prince.* What is this smoke that in the moon-  
light swims,  
So hampering the air with pleasantness ?  
Its silvered fragrance fills the room.



*Margaret.*

My prayers

Just ended. Incense my master gave me,  
And bad me use it of an evening so.

*Prince.* O maidenly cunning ! 'tis some lusty  
herb

You burnt. What's this it's doing to my love ?  
You knew it maddened like this ?—

*Margaret.*

What ? Leave me.

*Prince.* Aha, I see. Indeed I lackt in this.  
My love was clean ; you'd have it luxury ?  
'Twas done, was it not, lest I should be too slow ?  
Your coy denials are to prick it on ?  
If this is of your master's teaching, sure  
He had some knowledge beside of heavenly things.  
What, you do mean mere lewdness ?—  
Well, I am changed. Come, yield thee, then.

*Margaret.*

Go, Prince,

Before I curse thee for thy beastly words.

*Prince.* Come, girl, enough. You see I take  
your wish.

I'll do it, and then loathe you for 't. Or—go ?  
Ay, to the dark old King. This matter is,  
I see, for him to know. For as we talkt  
I somehow felt there was a thing kept hid  
Behind his mannerly speech. And suddenly  
It tare the curtain of his sorrowful words,  
The unkind inhabitant of his nature, lookt  
Into mine eyes impudent, ay, and gleeful,  
As if it had found a means for its device.  
And, as the hag is like the maid, a face  
Burnt in the joys of fiendish clips, that crime  
Was like what once was love for you. In truth  
The horror I saw sitting in his mind  
Then quite o'er-came my wit to grasp, for I  
Never before had seen a father's hate,  
And knew it not. Now its intent I see,  
This,—you have skilfully cheated him you make  
Much of your chastity : therefore most glad  
Were he if you dishonoured were. But now,  
It seems you are not quite so nice as he

Reckoned. The shame he would have forced on  
you

You have already wreakt upon yourself.

And yet perhaps I do him wrong. I am

Dismayed, my reason thrown, shamefully caught

In your fine wickedness, wilily noosed and lashed,

And the wise doors he kept outrage behind

(The squinting lechery of snouts and manes)

To starve, and put crazed faces to the grids,

Set wide ; and gaols of filthy-gesturing thoughts

Go loud through my brain, speaking tongues of hell ;

As you would have them, setting me on to do

Beastliness. Wait you here. I fetch the King.

To him look innocent of your hopes.

*Margaret (kneels).*

No !

Fetch not my father here ! Is this your love ?

*Prince.* Whether 'tis love or hatred now I  
know not,

What care you ? Lust is the thing for you.

*[He goes.]*

*Margaret.* Hear me, O God.

I have been lesson'd all imperfectly  
In thy saint knowledge ; for they killed the man,  
Horribly killed the weak old man who brought  
News of thee here, ere he could kindly lead  
My limping wit into thy council-place.  
All I have learnt of thee is, I am thine :  
(My father hates me for it). Art thou not mine ?  
Strangely thou doest all thy purposes,  
Little the mention I have heard of thee ;  
But is it not mislikely for thy weal  
That I have beauty ?  
When I was heathen, I thought it good ; but  
now  
Take it from me, O God ! Send now thy power  
here,  
Or surely thou and I be sorely used.  
In all this place we twain are quite alone,  
And many are against us. Well for us  
It were, if thou couldst make me laidly now.

Is it not easy for thee to spoil thy work ?—  
Sluice on my beauty shame, and ugly scalds ;  
Or change me altogether, turn this body  
Into a strangeness, make me mixture, laughter,—  
But pardon this wild talk ; I am unhinged.  
Pardon that then fear jump't upon my will  
And rode it down, so that I cringed my knees  
That once I sware only to thee should crook.  
Only in this thing have me in thy heed,  
Undo the strictness which the slow-skill'd years  
Use in their duty, and all harms they have  
Set by for me, now and at once unloose  
Banded upon me, *confusing this young flesh,*  
Unsettling from its many keeps my beauty.  
Am I not loved enough for this ? O then  
I'd have thee wroth, so thou bruise out my beauty.  
Ay me, I fear—O God, I loved him once—  
O swift, swift, my part done, thine yet remains ;  
Do some horror upon me, send some worm  
Of eager malady to crawl my skin

Tracking, or blow uncleanness on it, of sores  
Or vile obliterating rash, furfair  
Stiff in a stark mask. Hear me, O God !

*God speaks.*

I hear thee.

*Margaret.*

Is it God

Speaks words strangely into me, larger than aught  
My knowledge took before, and without sound ?

*God.*

I have been listening all this while, my friend.

*Margaret.* Give me some other shape, that to  
this prince

I be not lewdness nor a drunkenness  
Making him brutishly insult on thee.  
I would no longer be thus dangerous,  
Thus beautiful.

*God.*

Simple this prayer is, smelling sweet to me,  
Therefore I take it and begin my power.

Yea, I will largely let thee out of here,  
Of being beautiful, otherwise tiring thee.  
Thou shalt appear as God, and the glory of God.  
These two, when they shall look upon thy form,  
Shall be alone when I unmake the world.  
The appearance of the earth shall fail to them,  
And the great sides of the world flinch and crack  
    open,  
Spilling my glory out of its splitten hidings :  
I now put off the nature of the world.  
For long enough have I been matter, speed  
And business of forces, place and time,  
The roomy play of motes through the wide stress  
Of fine tense ether, building minds and worlds.  
But suddenly the whole kind of things appears  
Like scale upon the molten Real, soon  
Riving apieces, running, all unfixed,  
Out of dimension into God. And this  
Eternity, scattered with starry troubles,  
Becomes a firth of glory, till again

I am a deed, a strength wielding stuff,  
And out of the tide lifteth another shore.  
So shalt thou look ; for I will lend thee all  
My latter anger. Then the orderly stars  
Shall be a tumult of small crass, a scurf  
Worn for an instant by the fire divine ;  
And all the many powers of the world  
A spray like smoke driven before my face.  
God, when all the multitudinous flow  
Of Being sets backward to him ; God, when He  
Is only Glory, is before these two ;  
And nowhere is there aught but God and these.  
They are not safe. When no identity  
Can be outside my state ; when mind, nor sun,  
Nor commonalty of suns, nor oldest fate,  
But disarrangeth, mixing into Me ;  
Loose as a flame all fastened surety ;  
They are not separate : their confinèd selfs  
Shall burst their bands and squander into naught ;  
For all untimely here these two shall come



Alone into the doom, the present God.

*The Prince (without).* Now, thou innocent  
foxery, weeping, art thou ?

Take heart, I am not gone ;

But since thy wish is so, (for the sorrowing king

Tells me the naughty warlock taught thee lusts)

For thee I will be foul, and do a thing

Detestable to me yesterday.—Besides,

It is not Margaret, only a fiend

That wears her flesh.

[*He comes in.*

This is strange here ;

Can *I* exist as well as Holiness ?

I ?—I have forgotten what was “ *I*.”

There is no more a thing that saith, *I* am ;

There is nought to take my senses working.—

Death,

I hope ; I am abominable here.

[*A pause.*

*The King (without).* It should be done by now.

I gave him drink

Metheglin spiced with hot infamous drugs.  
I mingled in her foolish incense too  
Powders that wake wild lust : the air is well  
Infected,—yet he left her safe untoucht  
The first time : now I think she is tamed indeed.—  
Laughable was it how the wicked steam  
Workt in his blood—

[*He comes in.*

A spell ! O that a craft,  
Made of loose evils outside Nature, should  
More excellent than Nature be.  
The curst thing uses me as sun a vapour ;—  
Curse thee, and this almighty Hell leagued with  
thee.

NOTE.—So far as I know, Martin Schongauer's woodcut is the earliest presentation of this medieval legend—a girl turned by God into His own likeness. But in the central feature of the story I have differed from that noble piece of work, an alteration necessitated not only by preference, but by the nature of this Art. Apart, moreover, from the question of medium, Schongauer's version (which may be his own reading) somewhat smacks of dogma.

BLIND

## *Blind*\*

*Two tramps : a Woman and her blind Son, a simply.*

*M*OTHER. No further, child, to-night ;  
your mother's tired,  
And your blind feet have stumbled more than  
once.

Here's firing, a rare lot of withered gorse.

*Son.* Good : I think fire never puts such cheer  
Into his flames as when he's gorse to burn.

*Mother.* My soul, this is a sad way we are  
going ;  
I should be underground by rights, I think ;  
The woman's dead in me these many years,

\* Acting rights reserved by the Author.

And it's a cold thing to carry in your heart.  
I'd as lieve my flesh were trapt under this stone  
As start again to-morrow the old gate ;  
But it would need to be a heavier one  
To keep me still and smothered down, if death  
Got me before I'd found my man. Ah well,  
One more day nearer.—If my hate would learn  
Patience ! O, be satisfied, my disease,  
You shall have better food than this old heart ;  
And drink not all my life, you lime-hot hate ;  
There's a trough prepared somewhere against  
your thirst,  
Brimming, and then lap your fill.—Here, my son,  
Let me make sure again of your arms' strength :  
Ay, these are proper cords ; and there'll be need  
To take him firmly when we find him, child.  
Active he is and tall and beautiful  
And a wild anger in him.—See here, boy,  
My throat's his throat ; take it as you will his,  
No, tighter, tighter, where's your strength ? Ah——

*Son.* O mother, did I hurt you ?

*Mother.* Simple lad,  
You weren't half cruel enough ; you barely  
brought

The red flames into my eyes this time at all  
O but it's good, the grip you have, and good  
To feel it on me, try the pains of those  
Who strangle ; they will be *his* some day.

*Son.* Mother, don't let us have more of this  
game.

There's something gets into my fingers, dear,  
When I begin to press and feel you breathe  
Difficultly : why will you make me hurt you ?

*Mother.* Practice for you, and practice for my  
hate

To trust your grip. You know not what a peril  
Your hands must deal with ; doubts keep stinging  
me

Whether you have the sinews to make quiet  
That danger of a man.—And he escapes us !

We go too halt. Yet there's scant doubt he knows  
We're after him ; sure he is afraid  
And sleeps not well of nights. Married too  
Belike these twenty years,—curse her, the witch.  
Son, am I mad ? I wonder if I'm mad.

*Son.* They say so, mother. Now I've lit the fire,  
What are we going to eat ?

*Mother.* Yes, we must eat,  
You to keep strength and I to keep my wits.  
Something might hap to-morrow. I'll go beg  
At door, and if I fail (it's darkening) steal.

*Son.* Ho, fire's in a friendly mood to-night.  
That gypsy woman said there was a league,  
Didn't she, mother, between me and fire ?  
Hark at him purring when I stroke his ribs ;  
Does he not play to bite my hand ? She said  
His flames, if I sat and waved my hands for him,  
Would follow and lick after them, and if  
I raised them as to hit him, they would flinch.  
Is it true, mother ?—but I'm sure it's true.

Mother, have we blind souls ?

*Mother.*

What is it to you

If you have soul or no? All you are for

Is, when the time comes, and I tell you grip him,

To get the life in his throat under your hands,

And use your thumbs.

Sonn.

But is not soul a kind

Of hungriness? Because if so, I have some.

*Mother.* What good's that to you? O the child you are.

I had a soul once ; it was a poor thing

To this fierce master that now drives my flesh.

Who's fed you all these years?

*Soil.*

You, mother.

*Mother,*

Then

Love me for it, and burn up all your thought

To zeal like mine for this one deed of ours.

I fear you'll fail me.

Son.

Mother, that's not kind.

I know that some one must be killed by me,



And all my lifetime we've been looking for him.  
When the time comes, here are my hands. It  
seems

A simple thing ; and in my head there's room  
For much beside.

*Mother.*                      Who knows how lucky it is  
That in your body grown to such a manhood  
Your mind is still a child ?—my poor blind child !

*Son.* Are you rested, mother ? But it does  
not sound

Quite dark yet, so it's no good, I suppose,  
You going to the farmyards. Are you sure,  
Mother, you'll know him ?

*Mother.*                      I will know him, son,  
Never you fret. There's not his like in the world.  
You mustn't let him speak though, for I fear  
The sleeping habit of my tears.

*Son.* Let me alone for that. Give me his throat,  
And slim the words must be to sliver past  
The collar I'll have round it.

*Mother (to herself).* Ah no, God, not like this.

It must have been

Wicked to you, that long-dead love of mine,  
That it bore so unkindly. Will you not now  
Relent at last, and give my boy to hate ?  
It will be vile, if your delivering up  
His father to these hands, so rare a man,  
Be not thus changed from impiousness, nor made  
Holy with a fierce righteousness of hate,  
Him to divide from usage of his breath.  
I know you have warned death from him, that his  
son,

The minting of his passion on the world,  
A love he has forgotten, may be found  
The mischief of his life, his own wild youth  
Standing up formed against him, given hands  
To pluck him out of going on in the light,  
A wrong he did grown big to do him wrong.  
Will you come so near justice, and yet miss ?—  
Can you not hate him, child ? It must be you

Who do it, not merely I through you.—

Vain, this : there is no end to your father's guilt.

He it was maimed your sense and reason, to spoil

The rightness of this work. How is it right

That you should kill him when you hate him not ?

Yet as it falls, so must it ; for I think

My purpose will not now leave go my life ;

I have it for a nature, and my law.

When you were born, it took me, and your growth

Delighted it, not me. There never was

Joy in a mother's heart at your great strength ;

Those were no mother's thanks I gave to Heaven

That you were thewed so well, but a great praise

Because I knew God signed my vengeance with  
you.

Yet there is mother in me.—Ah, child, child,

How near my bitter suckling of you seems.

Often I lookt that you would cry to draw

The throbbing fire shut in my breasts ; and yet

Always you took it as it had been milk.

But none the less I knew, sorrow and guilt  
Were all I had to feed my innocent with.  
The cruelest thing was, how you smiled at me  
And never wept that I should give you drink  
Unnatural lawless nourishment, despair.  
Was it not harsh as brine to taste ?—but you  
Delighted in it and thrived, my poor blind babe.  
You do not hear. What are you rapt upon ?

*Son.* What, mother ? O that little girl we met  
At midday I was thinking of. You know  
She let me put my hands upon her head :  
What a wonderful loveliness that is of hair,—  
Soft, smooth, delicious as the smell of gorse  
In sunlight, and for slipping through your fingers  
Better than water. Hair—yes, it would be  
A nature, I suppose, between sunshine  
And water, and yet neither.—There must be  
Words equal to the loveliness of hair ;  
If I could find them ! Golden, do they say ?  
I wish the words for beauty had been made

By men who knew with hands, and not with eyes.  
Why isn't your hair like that little girl's,  
Mother? You mind when first my feeling knew  
The moon was shining on me? Well, I took  
That hair into my heart as wonderingly.  
But it feels strange there: it's as if it missed  
A welcome that it should have found therein.  
That's why I ask, have we blind folks a soul?

*Mother.* O Lord, Lord, this is not surely he  
who must

Thy vengeance do and mine?

*Son.*

The ugly beast,

What are her hands to mine? What right had  
she

To take the little one's hair out of my hands?

Beggar, says she, be off; how dare you lay

Your dirty mawlers on my darling's head?—

If hair was made for any hands, for mine.

The beast, I hate her.

*Mother.*

Ay, can you hate her

Who took away your play, poor simpleton ?  
The work we have to do, that would be rare  
For demons, will not move you half so much.  
That frightens me. And it was your father did it !

*Son.* Mother, how close these trees are over-  
head ;

Yet by their speech they are grown. Are they  
askew ?

*Mother.* Ay, poor old trees, right thrawn they  
are. They know

The north-west winds demand a posture of them  
And fear the weight of wild feet on their necks  
Spraining them, if they stood upright again.

They are grown used to stooping now, as I,  
Pulled mainly awry by long-served fierce desire,  
Have all my nature strained from rightness, fixt  
Crooked and nailed there, bending under my lust.  
I am old wood : there is no spring in me.

When this our murder no more burthenously  
Rides on my shoulders, but, as I've bred it to,

Springs from its tired seat at him I loved  
And fleshes there its greed, what will be then ?  
There is no blessed straightening for me.  
What is there for me ?  
You life of mine, surely you will not stay  
In this stale house, when your dear hate is gone  
To sleep beside his doing, filled and content ?  
You'll lack the comfort of his company ;  
And the dim corners of the house will stir,  
Rustling with unseen hauntings, that well know  
You are in dark, now that his eyes are gone.  
The best thing you can do then is, unlatch,  
Go out of doors and wander, till you find  
In some large quiet place the sleep you want.  
Son, mind the fire. I'll go get some food.

*[She leaves him.]*

*Son.* She's talkative to-night. I wonder what  
This thing is that is in her ? Some day, sure,  
She'll have a harm from it, it shakes her so.  
I wish we'd come across that bad man soon

And get it over ; she worsens every month.  
Will she turn bitter against me, do you think,  
If we're much longer meeting him ? She'll craze,  
I fear ; and O it's cold within me,  
Thinking the time may come she will not love me.  
Why, it seems only a few days gone by  
Since she would mother me, without cause be kind ;  
No wearying of my talk then ! But I think  
All that was years ago. And what a way  
Of walking now she's taken to,—no songs,  
No lagging, scarce a word ; just padding on  
As if we were escaping, or afraid.  
All these are like the leaves, that change their voice  
When a storm's near an hour before it comes.  
And if she turned against me—— ? O but I need,  
Mother, your love. We can't be looking, looking,  
All day and every day and still not find him ;  
And when we do, I'll make my part all right.  
Why, I'm forgetting fire. What, are you mum ?  
Here ; you can talk of gorse-rubbish, I know.—



I like this hour best of all the day :  
The evening cool upon my skin, the dark  
And stillness, like a wing's shelter bending down.  
I've often thought, if I were tall enough  
And reacht my hand up, I should touch the soft  
Spread feathers of the resting flight of him  
Who covers us with night, so near he seems  
Stooping and holding shadow over us,  
Roofing the air with wings. It's plain to feel  
Some large thing's near, and being good to us.  
But you it is, fire, who mainly make  
This time my best. I love to be alone  
Except for you, and have a talk with you.  
What are you ? There, I'm always asking that,  
And never get but laughing flames for answer.  
But I believe I've found you out at last.  
You, fire, are the joy of things ; there's naught  
Would stay in its own self, if it could find  
How to be fire and joy. For you're the escape  
From strictness and from nature laid on stuff

That once was freedom, still remembering it  
Under its show of tameness ; and there is  
Nothing that is not waiting for a chance  
Out of duty to slip, and give way madly  
To the old desire it has in it of joy,  
Standing up in a flame and telling aloud  
That it is fire and no more a shape.

The wonder is, when here some leaves and furze  
Have found the way to burn, the whole wide land  
Leap not up in a wild glee of fire,  
For all the earth's a-tiptoe to join in.  
Often I have to run and skip in a wind ;  
And then I seem to fill the space of the world,  
So large in gladness. It's the same thing as lets  
Poor straw exult into a shouting blaze.  
Hullo, here's a man.

*A Tramp comes in, with a fiddle.*

*Tramp.* Kind sirs, here's virtue for you. Ha,  
that's gorse

You're burning, ay, and ash.   Sirs, I have here  
The ware that is of most worth in the world,  
A chance to be good ; the wind was peddling it  
And would not take less than my pride for it,  
But 'tis to you free gift ;—No, I'll not take  
A penny for it : Yours, sir, yours, and welcome.  
So let there be some cheer and fire to-night  
For an old crazy blind bad vagabond.  
Here's pity come for you to entertain.  
Ah, thank you for those kind words, good brother  
    fire ;  
Your fellow seems a cautious man,—yet I'm  
A rung in the ladder up to Heaven.—Look here,  
Tongues lie, 'tis true.   But see my witnesses  
That never yet spake leasing.   Stand you forth,  
Sirs my trowsers, and testify, true souls,  
You are the brecks of Need, the very wear  
Of Pity and Ruth,—no, that's wrong, Ruth's a  
    lady.

Honour my trowsers, mister.   Why, old fire

Knew them at once, and gave them, honouring,  
warmth.

If any one might be proud it's fire ; for he  
Has heard God speaking, and is sib to Hell.  
A good-hearted fellow, fire, but blind ; and some  
Think blindness a poor lot—as it were, affliction ;  
It has crost my mind too. Well now, kind sirs,  
Do you believe my trowsers ? That my name  
Is pity ? (for no poor, no pity, you know.)  
Why, this is strange : I took you to be men,  
But by your speaking I perceive you all  
Are whales and cameleopards. Pray forgive me,  
Excellent necks, I reverence your neckships.

*Son.* Who are you ?

*Tramp.* Save us, one has got man's  
speech.

You had done better, Spots, to have left alone  
This English ; 'twill not help your browsings. But  
Who am I ?—Saint Francis bad me to his  
wedding,

Being the bride's godfather. There, the Wind  
His brother and the Rain his sister took  
Such a strong liking to me, I'll be hanged  
If they will leave me. O a virtuous pair  
No doubt ; but she keeps crying down my neck  
And he's forever singing psalms, that now  
They almost bore me, and—don't tell them, pray,—  
I wish they were not quite such faithful friends.  
But, who am I ? Crazy I am and blind,  
Who once had wits and seeing. But now words,  
Words are all my comfort, words and brandy.  
Thank God for words, the best things he has made.

*Son.* Blind am I, but better off than you :

I never saw.

*Tramp.* What, blind ?

Your hand ; ay, sure, that's a blind man's hand.

*Son.* First, old man, answer me.

[*He pins him by the arms.*]

*Tramp.*

Well, well,

There's no call for gripping me like that.

*Son.* What colour are your eyes ?

*Tramp.*

Blind, blind,

Blind as the weather.

*Son.*

Was it you loved a girl——

*Tramp.* No, no, it's false. You've given ear  
to slander.

*Son.* I am glad. Not yet, not yet. Ah, I  
forgot,

He's a tall seeing thewed man, not like this.

*Tramp.* And I'm glad you've unclaw'd me,  
What a clutch !

Now, will I give you a tune ?

*Son.*

No.

*Tramp.*

Thank the Lord ;

I needn't scratch my cursed fiddle to-night

For supper. I suppose you've got some supper ?

Lie there, my art,

And a gouty devil quash you with his hoof,

Although it's heart-strings I have stretched upon  
you

To squeak out bawdry, which will get me brandy,  
And brandy makes the old words move again  
Like a bronze-harnesst soldiery that goes  
Sounding and sunlit, treading marble roads.

*Son.* Can you skill words ?

*Tramp.* Not I, but by the Lord  
Words can skill me. They're a better drunken-  
ness,

And put your sorrowing toes and unhappy heels  
And reproachful hams farther outside the doors  
Of sense, shut deaf to their clamouring of pains,  
Than any quart of brandy.

*Son.* What are words ?

*Tramp.* God's love ! Here's a man after my  
own heart ;

We must be brothers, lad. What, you're not one  
Who thinks the soul a kind of chemistry,  
And words a slag it hides its working in ?  
What are words ? Come, I've the speech to-  
night ; we'll talk.

In with you to my porch, and I will teach you  
Serious things. Sit in my mystery,  
And be wise. So first, learn we the world ;  
Then, climbing to more excellent knowledge, learn  
How words are things out-marvelling the world.—

The world's a flame of the unquenching fire,  
An upward-rapturing unhindered flame,  
Singing a golden praise that it can be,  
One of the joys of God the eternal fire.  
But than this soaring nature, this green flame,  
Largely exulting, not knowing how to cringe,  
God's joy, there are things even sacreder,  
Words : they are messengers from out God's heart,  
Intimate with him ; through his deed they go,  
This passion of him called the world, approving  
All of fierce gladness in it, bidding leap  
To a yet higher rapture ere it sink.  
They have our souls for their glib travelling,  
Our souls, part of the grain of the burning world.  
And full of the very ardour out of God



Come words, lit with white fires, having past  
through

The fearful hearth in Heaven where, unmixt,  
Unfed, the First Beauty terribly burns.

A great flame is the world, splendid and brave ;  
But words come carrying such a vehemence  
Of Godhead, glowing so hot out of the holy  
kiln,

The place of fire whence the blaze of existence  
rose,

That dulled in brightness looks the world against  
them,

Even the radiant thought of man. There be  
Who hold words made of thought. But as stars  
slide

Through air, so words, bright aliens, slide through  
thought,

Leaving a kindled way.

*Son.*

Ah, this is dark.

I am not kind for them to travel through,

These glories, words. Is there smoke to the world,  
As other flames have smoke ? I'm that, belike.  
But O the emptiness sometimes within me,  
And I paining and striving after words  
To ease my sorrowful dumb heart.—But you,  
They'll come and go through you ? Are they so  
fine ?

*Tramp.* Talk they of angels ? Never was  
there saint

Heard mercy so soft spoken, felt such wise  
Pitying forgiveness in his closed communion,  
As I've had fear and loathing in my heart  
Soothed into calm by mild blue-wearing words.  
Terrors ? destructions ? But for crimson wings,  
Garmented wrath, steel hammered and held for  
war,

And faces set against ruth—no rioting town  
Prophet beheld shadowed by scathe of sword  
Or rained upon by coals, elate thereat,  
Had such a siege of seraphs awning it

As I've had camp't around me, without cause,  
Beauty and terror liveried in words.

And I have known when that famed holiness,  
That word seeming arrayed in cloth-of-silver,  
Love, has suddenly turned so evil a thing,  
Devils were fools in wickedness to it ;  
And holding my soul numb in its cold look  
Has fascinated me to its own evil.

O boy, I've lived : my misery and blindness,  
Ay, and the death that's private in me now,  
Were things for you to worship, could you but  
know

What service 'twas I got them in, a war  
As old as Hell, still fighting.

Where's this supper that you talkt about ?  
I'm thirsty with this rattling.

*Son.*

To-day, now,

We met a little girl. My straying hands  
Found out her head ;—there went a thrill in me,  
I'd opened a new way of being pleased,

Her hair. How I delighted all my feeling  
With touch of that strange fineness on my skin !  
But after, memory of that delight  
Wanted to put on words. And I had none  
For it to live in, and it ached in me.  
Have you got words to cure the heart, when  
    longing,  
After there has been pleasure too much felt,  
Is like a twisted stitch about it ?

*Tramp.* Come, you're the speechless world.

    Singers you have  
Given you to interpret your own souls  
To you, and put in tongueless mouths a song.  
Here's one. Now, World, thou shalt be satisfied.  
Hot from my heart, made yesterday, is this ;  
A friend of mine was hanged, and I got drunk,  
Whence this. Open your ears. Are you ready ?  
    [*Twanging his fiddle-strings.*]

Heaven, lay your harps aside, and let Hell speak  
    a bit.

Ay, we all know you were good, and are good,  
safe in Heaven ;

We hear you giving thanks therefor, but don't  
you think time is

That you thank us for being bad, and trying out  
your holiness ?

What's good without temptation, and who could  
tempt but we, the bad ?

How did you come there, O you good ones, if  
not by resisting evil ?

Look at our pains barred over with gratings, and  
the throngs of your saviours,

Look, and be ashamed of your bliss : for your  
good we are here.

We netted your godly paths, and made torments  
for you ;

We whipt you and rebuked you, for the Lord  
desired to see you

Practising faith and meekness, and deserving your  
reward.

And it is our doing, that you are free of  
Heaven.

Cunningly were we fashion'd, and put to a cunning  
use,

Made to delight in pestering you, and blindly  
pleasuring

To hound all those who could be good, not wise  
enough to know

We blest you with our cruelties, maimed so that  
we could not tell

You had our ignorant backs for stairs, leading  
you up into Heaven.

We thought that wickedness was best, not masters  
of our thought ;

God had robbed us privately of the power and  
will to be good.

We had given us wolves' hearts, and the ruth of  
shrikes was in us,

Rats infecting cities with plague, and the swine  
that ate child's flesh.

And all that you unworthily might spend your  
pity and love.

We were the hates forgiven of you, the lecheries  
you withstood,

We did you the injuries and scorns you blest us  
for.

Bound we were in prison, and you came and  
loved us there,

Although you knew our hidden minds bitterly at  
work

To pay you back with harm, when we got out  
again.

We lay down with Evil, and fellowed him at  
meals,

And when we came for alms to you, told you  
that we loved

All good things, and you believed us, knowing that  
we lied.

You could not rest from good, for we were goads  
pricking you on ;

The blossom of your holiness needed our crimes  
for dung.

Like winds we howled about you, but all our  
loudness served

Only to blow your smouldering charity into a  
golden flame.

Are not we the nobler, the more honourable  
we ?

You had an hour's pain on earth, with certain  
Heaven at end ;

We have pains in Hell for ever, to get you into  
Heaven.

Harp, ay, keep on harping ; we know for why you  
harp,

So that we shall not be heard, the sacrificed for  
good.—

How's that, my lad ? Hurrah for Hell !

*Son.* But why ?

*Tramp.* You simply, Hell did that.

*Son.* It did not take me.



*Tramp.* O world, that's just your way. You  
sit a stock

When new songs are thrown at you, mumbling  
still

Old idiocy, and living in your past.

But when I'm dead and rotten, 'twill be then

"Yon was a poet if you like, a jockey!"

Whereas the truth is I am out of date.

Poor world, yours is the loss. O I've been paid.

We who blink not for the swung sword of Heaven,

We with the calling danger in our blood,

Gladdest of fighters under the sun, must be

Our own paymasters;—I've fought, and been  
worsted,

Matter for pride! For I am one whose ears

Seldom have not the din of the warring drums

That troop the brave lusts and the crafty sins.

The listed under the flags of our revolt

Look not for wages: they affront defeat

Who go against the seated force of the world

That names itself eternal good and justice,  
And gets belief, since it knows how to punish.  
We have no knees for it ; and let them shoot  
From their advantage on the walls of Heaven,  
The service of the Lord, their malice aimed,  
Their slingèd war of sickness for our flesh  
And madness for our minds, we'll stand upright  
And be ourselves, not good. Do you know me,  
boy ?

Am I hunger and rags to you ? Fool, I have been  
One of the mutiny that attempts God  
And to take landing on the side of Heaven,  
For foothold on the slippery peril of wall  
Reaching and tearing at God's sheer resentment,  
Still to be thrown down by the towering glass  
A litter of upturned faces, gesturing  
Against the calm front of his Sabbath's wall,  
The desperate height of shining builded scorn.  
This I have been ; there is not in the land  
A surgeon but, examining me, would

Tell you I speak the truth. However, here  
And now, I'm chiefly hunger. Who was he  
Who first invented supper? I perceive  
The greatness of that man.

[*The mother has come back.*]

*Son.* Is that you, mother?

*Mother.* We sleep hungry to-night.

——Who's this?

*Tramp (bowing).* I greet you, woman of the  
house;

I also greet the supper, though I smell none.

*Mother (low).* Michael, Michael?

*Tramp.* Where's that?—Lad, did you hear  
A girl's voice speaking?—O my wits.

*Mother.* Michael!

I never thought of you as growing old.

*Tramp.* The stuff they sell for brandy now-  
a-days!

Poisoned I am. Here's a kind lady asking me  
What will I take for supper, and my hearing

Is made so foolish, it's as if some dream  
Spoke,—one of my songs, one of my loves,  
Who knows? Some memory it is.

*Mother.* Michael infirm! Michael broken and  
crippled!—

O not to meet you thus I've tired and prayed.  
The years would not have gone more cruelly  
Over you if they had been flames. Your brow  
Is written on in sorrow. Do you mind  
A lap you laid your head in once, a hand  
That could unmark the trouble from your brow?

*Tramp.* There have been many, woman or  
dream or ghost

Or madness—that, I think. I knew you'd come.

*Mother.* I have you again. I heed not anything  
But that. I cannot tell how it had been  
Were you still happy and great spirited. Now,  
So poor, so hurt, so wronged with age,—and I,  
Too long lacking you, have had injury.  
Time is for both of us we found each other.

Will you not know me, Michael ?

*Tramp.*

Yes, your voice

I know.

*Mother.* Unkind ! Am I so gone from you ?

*Tramp.* If this is madness, it's a gentle one.

Come you to punish me ? Are you my sins  
That speak so ruthless ? I repent me not,  
Nor if you shift your softness into gibing,  
And stop my sleep with moans. If there was  
harm

Done through me, let the Lord repent, not me.  
I will not lighten Him of any guilt.

*Mother.* Poor sick distracted brain,—O how  
you need

Me and my love, thank God ! All that I have  
To give you, and take nothing,—only thus  
Can I relieve the pent and suddenly-thawed  
Plenty of love, loosed from a stiffened winter  
To pour and well like an inward bleeding wound  
Oppressing over my heart. Give me this ease

Of caring for you, finding out your comfort ;  
I want no other kindness from you.

*Tramp.*

Woman,

Who are you ?

*Mother.* Michael, you do not know me ?

*Tramp.* O cannot you see I'm blind ?

*Mother.*

Alas ! and yet

I should be glad : you need me more than ever.

But—blind ! You for whose eyes the earth put on  
Such wonder ! You visited ! O it is wrong,  
wrong !

*Son.* Is it now, mother ? Is this the man ?

*Mother.*

What say you ?

Michael, he is our son. You did not know  
It was a son ? He's well framed ? Ah, I forgot.—  
Boy, come and kiss your father.

*Son.*

Cunning, cunning,

O my mother's cunning.

*Tramp.*

We travel too fast

For me ; it seems, I've run into a wife :

Let me breathe there awhile. Lo, I, the rebel,  
The wanderer, the lawless, settled down  
A husband, all in five minutes ! It's a great  
change, lady ;

Yet if the Flying Dutchman could not 'scape,  
Why, how should I ?—But for this family,—  
Presenting me at once with a full-grown heir  
Is mighty sudden. And it isn't decent.  
I'm all for being decent now.

Is that big man my son, though ? What's his  
trade ?

Is he a large eater ?—Be dutiful,  
My son, honour your poor dear worthy father,  
Who so unselfish was he at great pains  
Begot you, and to whom you owe that now  
You hunger in this miserable world.

Surely this asks a large return in love,  
Such care for your well-being, and you still  
Unborn ? I hope you have it for me, son ?  
But don't salute me ; we've embraced already ;

Your loving is too violent for me.

*Mother.* Let him but kiss you. Child, will you kiss your father ?

*Son.* Yes, I will kiss him.—O I like this cunning.

*Mother.* You know me now, dear ?

*Tramp.* If you're she I think,

I may as well admit that yon's my boy.

Strange, but I never thought of you as still  
Alive.

*Mother.* I'm filled with you, my brain and heart.  
You make me foolish, dear. For deep within me  
Some vague discomfort lies, a dumb warning,  
Which cannot come into my thought for you  
Taking so much room there. Just now, when I  
Was stricken with you, and into its wont,  
Long dry of it and closed, the love ran warm,  
And I was all in pangs of the sudden loosening,  
A sharp fear flasht in me ; something there was  
I must provide against : but what it was



I cannot tell for sure. It must wait, then ;  
It may come back.—And now, your hand's in  
mine !

The thing must give place in my thought to that.  
—You are silent, Michael.

*Tramp.* Am I ? Well, I suppose  
It's too much happiness is gagging me,——  
What did you say your name was ?

*Mother.* Alice. Ah ! [*She sighs.*

*Tramp (springing up).* No !

Not she ? Not Alice ? O I did not think it was  
you.

You've been a sorrow, Alice.—Why have you come  
To spoil my dear regrets ?—The others were  
Despairs, not loves. I would meet any of them  
Nor wince ;—but you !—O Lord, am I ashamed ?  
No, I'd liever not have found you.

*Son (aside).* More long,  
Surely, than needs. There's one chance missed  
already.

*Tramp.* I have bitterly blamed you, boy ; but  
I forgive.

Your coming frightened me away from her

A many years ago ; but let that be.

In sign whereof, come here and you may kiss me.

Pardon the lack of veal ; I don't keep cows.

*Mother.* Ah, thank you, Michael. For he is  
Our love, and kissing him will be to take  
That to your heart again. I will lead you to  
him——

O God, what's this ?

*Tramp.* You choke me : free my throat,  
Blast you !

*Mother.* Let him go, fool, it's not the man.  
I've changed my mind, too. Hear me, you  
devil, loose him !

*Tramp.* Did you mean this, Alice ?

[*The struggle ends.*

*Mother.* Is he dead, my God, dead ?

*Son.* Why, he was weak and frail under my hands ;

You mistook his danger. I've not failed you now ?  
And you were always saying that I would.  
Will you not praise me, mother ?—

*(Whimpering)* Why don't you speak ?

*Mother. (She has been sitting bowed over the dead  
man. Slowly she raises her head and looks at  
her son, dry-eyed.)*

This crime is mine.—O cramp is at my heart.—  
I have the guilt. I need not so have grieved  
About your eyes : it was I who was blind.  
I know not how to bear you close to me,  
The touch of your hands will be a fearful thing  
For me henceforth.—Give me your hands in  
mine ;  
The Lord in Heaven knows nothing can be  
To any human soul more horrible  
Than these poor dreadful hands : therefore I kiss  
them,  
And it may do for prayer. At Judgement Day  
Tell them, my child, you did not make his death.  
I will not share it. It is all mine.

# THE FOOL'S ADVENTURE

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# *The Fool's Adventure*

## IN FOUR DIALOGUES

### I

*The Seeker.*

*A Hermit.*

**S**EEKER. I know, between all kinds of the  
world there are

No layers, no division : stone, leaf, flesh,—

All's flowing, like a stream of many waters.

But like a spilth of oil in the stream

Man's nature the same current flows along

Unmixing in the general kindliness,

Showing like slime against the deep wise water.

All Being with Mankind and the sin of Man

Refuses mixture ; Sin is for man alone ;

Yet is he carried down the same tendency  
As the great pomp of all the creatures goes.  
Who, that has read into the soul of man,  
But is not ware that man's unhappiness,  
Wherein he lives as in a smoke, comes hence ?  
He travels the same way, under the same force,  
As all the beasts ; yet being not a beast,  
And this is Sin. What I must find is how  
Man may be man, yet sinless.

*Hermit.* It is with mind

That thou hast read Man and the World ?

*Seeker.* How else ?

*Hermit.* Thou hadst done better with love.

*Seeker.* I take not that.

*Hermit.* The mind is to interpret to the heart :  
Only the heart can answer to the world ;  
Mind knows the speech, but the heart the meaning.

*Seeker.* Well, to my question. Where grows  
the root of sin ?

What a strong thing it is ! Almost it seems

That Good is only if Sin lets it be.

Who is the monger of Man's Good and Bad ?

What knowest thou of the world ? Knowest  
thou this ?

But that can hardly be, for thou hast not,  
I have heard say, left once this little valley  
These twenty years ago. And nowadays  
Experiment not musing is the thing.  
Thou canst not know the ways of men.

*Hermit.*

*My son,*

These many years I have not been perplex  
With the loud manners that fill all the towns  
Of little-thoughted men. Here in my hut  
I have perused with all my sense the earth,  
And never once out of this valley gone.  
I think, better I know the world than those  
Who take abroad, into strange lands, small minds,  
And choke their wonder,—that, the only sluice,  
Easily out of gear, where through may pour  
The pressure of Truth outside us, the deep world

Our enclosed minds are sunk in,—that they choke  
And clutter up with gluts of rarities,—  
Voyage the warm seas, where mild as mercy blow  
Molucca breezes from the nutmeg woods,  
Or brave the festering Congo and the jaws  
Of crocodiles that guard Zambezi fords,  
Through feverous land and a drumming din of flies  
Up to the thirst of Tartary, and beyond,  
Adventuring into the Northern night,  
To roam the haunted frosts, and hear far off  
Ice-thunder round the pole, the shouldering flocks.  
As farmers put heapt trash in an empty barn  
They store in corners of their memories  
Lumber from all the climes. Has foreign ground  
More meaning in it than an English field ?  
But I, still staying in this upland hollow,  
Where the earth gets up in royal attitudes  
About me, sovereign for leagues, first ground  
The weather treads on, visiting the plains,  
Do better with my hills and silences.



That mountain yonder—look how the fells rise  
And lift themselves endeavouring, till they achieve  
Power upon space and a ken not disturbed,—  
The unconcernèd summit of grey stone,  
Aloof in its own wisdom, greatly calm :  
And not a tree to break the mighty swerve  
Up into the middle sky, the whole upheaval  
Plain to be seen. The figure of that hill  
If one should spend a life considering,  
He would not die ignoble ; and it would  
Outlast a long life's questioning. Besides,  
I have the continual workings of the air,  
Who, that is wise, has ever tired of these ?  
Never an hour has been, since I came here,  
That I could look upon nor be amazed.  
Look at this rain now ; that was a great event !  
A darkened murmurous half-hour of rain  
And hidden stormwork on the mountain-heads,—  
Out of the clefts and off the ledges pours  
The drenching (but its work is left behind)

And down the scarred cliff-sides suddenly lives  
A white releasement of a hundred streams,  
A gleam like weather'd marble-veins in the sun.  
For, ere the shower seems well begun, the last  
Tatters of its proof gloom are leaving us,  
Drawn after the hasty errand of the storm ;  
The sagg'd awning furls, and sunshine is let in.  
And now that the dinning rain is gone, a voice  
Known dimly through the rattling past talks plain,—  
The water milling the heavy stones, and long  
Grumbling of boulders from their beds dislodged ;  
Like buried roar of gongs that have been heard  
Sounded in faery halls under the hills.  
And all the pother—wherefore ? Half a day  
Maybe it takes for the spate to fulfil itself  
(From here to the sea is scarce a score of miles),  
To bank its load of gravel privily  
In thievish guarded cellars of the water ;  
Then into new storms, and all is to do again.  
Wherefore ?—No need for me to ask Wherefore ?

I know it part of a Self, as a stray feeling,  
A startle, say, at a chance sound, is part  
Of my Self. He who has wondered all so well  
As I these twenty years at streams and hills,—  
Who has become their rashness, been their bulk,  
Going into their nature, putting on  
Their being and their mood and their old usage,—  
Knows that of all this world there is a Self ;  
And, in some region of existence, lies  
The Presence of this Self. Nor deem, my son,  
Thy race a thing apart, not common kind  
With Earth, these hills, that lake and its margent  
reeds

That greenly dusk over the evening in it.  
It may be, we are close to the wheel's rim here,  
Touching the hooping tire of forged law,  
And things seem separate ; but all, like spokes,  
Are towards the nave, and fixt in it at root,  
The Self of the World. There is the authority  
Of the brook's speed, and of Man's Good and Bad.

*Seeker.* And there, in the presence of this self,  
will be

The mastery of Sin ?

*Hermit.*                      There, if at all.

But who may talk with it ? Or who shall go  
Into its place ?

*Seeker.*                      Truly, if none e'er tries,  
None knows.

*Hermit.*              Well, if you go to find this thing,  
Your journeying must be through reigns of mind  
Rather than lands and tongues.

*Seeker.*                                      It must be tried.

## II

### *The Seeker.*

I have achieved. That which the lonely man  
Spoke of, core of the world, that Self, I know.  
Like one small pool to the reach of Heaven, I  
Am open to a vastness. Hearken, thou,  
Do I not know thee right ? Thou art the deep

Whereunto all things yearn unwearingly,  
Some unaware, some hating that they yearn,  
But all into a stillness, into Thee,  
Falling at length, and their unrest is done,  
Until again thou blurt them out of thee,  
Out of the middle to the rind. And yet  
Not them, but piecemeal what they were  
New-fangled into other companies.

It is as if, not only once, far off,  
Aloof from place and being I had watched  
The spell betwixt two happenings end again ;—  
The dark's distress, slow qualms mastering it,  
Blind thrills, and last, the sudden pang of light.  
*Methinks, plainly as I've felt earth's swoon*  
Wince at the touch of spring, awakening her,  
The peace, thy region, shudder I have felt  
When with it meddles thy new imagining ;  
And in the smooth element, ruffling, grows a  
throb,  
Marring with its strong rhythm the prone calm.

Beat of the fresh beginning of an order ;  
One settled eddy at last, whose scouring kirtles  
Gather to substance and perplex'd shape,  
To thickening spots of coarse, and curds of fire.  
Again within the uniform'd principle  
Stress, that it have a grain ; and yet more stress,  
Till the unbounded shiver of light shatter  
Innumerosly, and into the clear inane  
Come like a ghost another swarm of motes  
Shepherded by thy thought into new flocks,  
Away from thee, outward, circling, numberless  
kinds ;

Yet the same partner, the old lust, is with them,  
Unrest, severance from thy quietude.

Nor first, nor last of them, this swirl of stars,  
Unlike the others, but in this thing like.

I from the place in Being called Mankind  
Am come, seeking thee, and look, I know thee.  
Not with my sense and reason only ; these  
Man fashioned for near needs of common life :

Good tools, but to find thee of no more use  
Than ladders to thatch houses reach the sun.  
Not Reason finds thee, though he walk with  
gait

Taking gulfs in his'stride as far across  
As in his yearly bout the throw of Saturn.  
My wisdom was to practice with the power  
Emotion, since I knew it was, though stall'd  
In Somewhere, yet a piece of the Everywhere.  
I knew my soul or self lied, when she said  
Thoroughly she knew that stud of forces named  
My body,—they all knew her and obeyed :  
For this her hand did never bit, nor could.  
Because it was more honourable than she  
And all her royalty of sense and reason,  
*I humbled her and these before this thing,*  
And taskt them with a long and bitter work  
To build a watch-tower, that the gaze therefrom  
Might peer over the impracticable dykes  
Of nature ; in that roofless hermitage,

Unneighbour'd of Life, but viewing the whole

Fate,

This thing I found in me, Emotion, watched ;

And all Fate spake with her, like as the noise

Of shawms and sackbuts may wake fellowship

In a harp's unused strings ; 'twas so she thrilled

Answerably to Fate as to a din,

The Emotion I have in me, being in tune

With Fate, the greater passion with the less,

Each to the other kith. 'Tis this in me,

Thou Self of the World, that knows thee now.

And now

That thou art known, what answer, Self of the

World ?

*The Voice of the World.*

So I am known. And which of my desires

Has won to know itself, and so known me ?

*Seeker.* I am Man. Man knows thee here.

*World.*

Thou strangest of me,



Man, it were better hearing had some other  
Thrown back a sense along its own sleuth from  
me.

*Seeker.* That I believe, if only 'tis with Man  
Thou dealest, that, knowing, he accuses thee.—  
Thou answerest not ? Art thou amazed if Man  
Accuses thee ? But I will show thee cause.  
Whether thou couldst be if the world were not,  
Or wert before the world, and in a mood  
Made it as if it were a song,—wilt be  
When thy song's riming fails, thy mood doth  
change,  
I know not,—only thou art to the world  
A Self. But all things come from thee, and all  
Go thither back. Here, we are part of thee,  
But there, we are thou thyself. But thou hast mixt  
Sin into Man : though, like all else, his nature  
Is towards thee, this pricks away from thee.  
Or is it that the tether unto thee  
As tooth'd and ragged gyves is fastened on him,

So that to him cruel is thy constraint,  
The Law, to all else gentle, unfelt, alone  
Hurtful to Man? Ay, hear now what Sin is ;  
For what is named Man's knowledge of Himself  
Is just pain of this gnawing, which keen self-  
knowledge,  
The bitter discomfort to be part of thee,  
So fiercely burns within him that the white flame  
Called Consciousness ousts from its habitation  
All but its own delusion, its lamp of pain,  
Dafts from man's wit the clew thou hold'st him by,  
Cheats him to think he may have power to follow  
Laws of his own, not thine,—that he is not  
In thee, worsening his lot tenfold,  
Making him still tug at the biting gyves.  
For this does man accuse thee. Hast thou not  
Power upon thine actions? Surely, Lord.  
Do so, that man is never more a nest  
For sin. The chief thing thou hast given Man  
Is, that he has the noble power to hate

Himself : to be aware of the flange of Law,  
Which is to hate it, though he know it not.  
And what is Law but the feeling after Thee,  
The blind desire in things to be at one  
With thee ? So Man desireth, and alone  
Hates his desire, the main thing in his being.  
Man has gone out of the large commonalty ;  
The rapture and the kinship of the earth,  
The strained blue ecstasy of the night and stars,  
The faith whereby the mountains still endure  
In their old attitude of prayer, the psalm  
Of young brooks, and the loud seas' prophecy,—  
No like to these for Man, no part in this  
The one thing common through the world that  
    makes  
Life of the flesh, flame of the marrying atoms,  
Strength of the hills, speed of the airs, be one.  
He hates the law, and therefore hates himself,  
Hates Thee, that is. Thou see'st what comes of  
    this ?

With desperate flings he tries to be rid of Law,  
But only makes the flange gride harshlier ;  
The beasts lust blindly, but Man craftily,  
For pleasure : but 'tis as a fever thirsts ;  
To Man alone, from the dust his footsteps mark  
Gives nature to lift eyes and see the large  
Kind-season'd region that he travels through ;  
But also (and this asks for all his gaze)  
Gives him to see Death sitting by the way,  
To measure fearfully the space between  
His robe clutcht, and grim alms demanded of him.  
Self knowledge wretched for self-ignorance happy :  
This is thy doing. Does this seem to thee  
Good ?

*World.* Peace, for here be neither good nor bad ;  
I am myself, not Man. Thou knowest me ?  
Not so. I am not sinful, nor am good.  
Atoms have their own nature, and the stars,  
All life, slime, spawn, grass, birds and beasts,  
their own,

Each than the last more manifold, a new kind.  
The thing that, quickening in the beast's dark brain,  
Made the beast no more beast but Man, was Sin ;  
White courses to the stars, and sin to man.  
Thus is it to me ;—to thee, it is not good ?  
And what have I to do with this ?

*Seeker.*

Art thou

He to whom Man lifts his thought, the God ?  
But no, I think thou art some outer devil,  
Filching the voice of Him who is within  
The clouds of Time and the World, hangings  
that hide  
God and his love and zeal.

*World.*

But, if thou wilt,

What thou art I will shew to thee.

My thought

Moved in its brooding, and its movement stirred  
A ripple in the quiet of the waters  
Whereunder my thought's Sabbath is moored  
deep,—

The region of the happening of my Will.  
And when my act, this ripple's viewless travel,  
In its upheaval reacht the upper calm  
Laid on the mere, whose waters are my Will,  
Whose surface is Appearance and broad Place,  
Its breaking whirls became a journeying wave,  
That at the last became a gathered sea,  
A pile of all the waters in one tide.  
But it is grown to its height ; and now, before  
The smooth heapt power tumbles down in surf,  
Its head is whiten'd with an age of spray,  
Weakness beginning. Lo, that spray is Man,  
Crest of the wave, and token of its downfall.  
Not stately, like the early wave, nor clear,  
Nor with an inner lodging for the light,  
But troublous, misty, throwing off the light  
In glitter, all apieces, loose, uneasy.  
Truly my act is near its end when thou,  
Man, the loose spray, ride on its stooping neck,  
From one firm bulk of waters, one onward gang,

Broken away to be a brawl of drops,  
Freedom and hither-thither motions light,  
Each drop one to itself, a discrete self.  
Thou freedom, thou high self-acquaintance, thou  
    Sin,  
Man, dost thou know me? But now know  
    thyself.

### III

*The Seeker.*

*A Sage.*

*Seeker.* At first I thought it was not God ; but  
    now

I have no hope left. For I went abroad  
Asking for certain knowledge of God's goodness,  
Which none could give me. Then at last I saw,  
Although his speaking squared not with my wish,  
There was no cause to doubt my reason's word,  
That the World's Self must be what man calls  
    God.

*Sage.* Give not up lightly.

*Seeker.*

Was this a light thing,

After my hopes and seekings, to find God  
Careless, nay, bitterly mocking man for sin?

*Sage.* I am an old man talkative and dreamy,  
This search of thine remembers me of one  
Strange dream I had a many winters gone.  
Shall I have patience from thee if I tell it?

*Seeker.* I came here for advice, not dreams. I  
guess,

Whether thou hast my patience or hast not,  
I shall not leave thee till it's told. Is it long?

*Sage.* It was a slave, and he toiled with a kern  
Made, as it seemed, of one blue shining stone,  
Clearer and bluer than Eryri's waters.

And the kern held strange corn, gold grains and  
silvern,

Which, being ground, threw up a dust of light,  
And motes of light were tangled in his hair,  
And like a gramary the glittering chaff  
Misted that crooked toil, that fair it seemed,



Nothing so radiant as that slavery.

Where was that strange corn sown ? said I, and  
who

Is master of thee and so rare a kern ?—

He turned, and lookt at me through the bright  
haze.

He was an angel, and the sapphire kern

The hollow heaven, and the corn he ground

Was all the silver stars and golden suns.

Still of that grist and brittle light I askt :

What acre was it drilled in, by whose hand ?—

I was not at the sowing, answer'd he ;

But He who ploughed, whose coulter brake the  
clods,

Told me His Word was sown at large in a field

Broad cast, and soon would spring. I watched  
for it ;

Lo, this was the crop,—His Word, but so en-  
wrapt,

So huskt in light, so sheathed in a harsh rind,

Long must I bray it, blowing off the chaff  
And shining flaky scabbards of the Word,  
This corn, before the Word itself I find.  
But I was wiser than the angel then ;  
And I suppose he's grinding still, unless  
His Master has been by, and told him light  
And all such husks are quite fit things for study.  
Who looks to find the Word by freeing it  
From casing draff, is like when his shift ends  
To have found nought else but husk. Be sure  
If anything seems dirt and husk to you,  
You're not the man is going to find the Word.

*Seeker.* Here's nought to my purpose. But thy  
memory  
Leaks, I suppose, like all old vessels do.  
My quest, as I have told thee once, is this :  
Out of the brutish rose up man : the clay  
Upon the wheel of years became a jar ;  
But when 'twas fully fashion'd, it had caught  
From some strange shower liquour such as clay

Never before was moist with : Man was sinful.  
Why he, who let shape Man, should so have used  
His work, pouring into him Sin, I seek.  
The clay were better still an unhandled lump  
Than wrought only to hold such sour evil.  
But if it be possible, I would find what means  
May empty Man of sin : this was my quest ;  
But what hope, now that I have talkt with God  
And heard Him speak ?—A raven's voice, his  
bill

Up to the neesings sunk in a lamb's wet life,  
His chuckling greed half-smother'd in the warm  
inwards,

That scarce he could bark his kill, so choked,  
would sound

Startling the quiet of a hill-shut noon  
In sunny early summer kindlier  
Than when God talkt with me.

*Sage.*

When didst thou talk

With God ?



Knowing whose hand upon their shoulders laid :  
Then is a curdle of worlds loosed again  
And is abroad in the great deep again.

I mean the soul, that feeds on many dooms  
And waits now for this world ; there is allowed  
Nor part, nor kind, nor shape, in space or time,  
Therein, nor law ; but these come out of it.  
Over its own expressions, heavens and stars,  
Fires and lightnings, life, thought, sin and pain,  
The ever widening roundures of the work  
One act thrown up by it must make, it broods ;  
But they, remembering That whence they came,  
Each gathered crowd of things, and of Its  
presence

Deeply aware, by fine unthinkable nerves  
Are tied to it, and have it for a self.

*Sage.* Just that, for one who thinks, does the  
World mean.

And that thou thoughtest God ?

*Seeker.*

I did.

Therefore

*Sage.*

I said, Poor fool.

*Seeker.*

What is it then ?

The world ?

*Sage.*

It is a name.

*Seeker.* What wilt thou mean ? What name ?

*Sage.* The name Lord God chooses to go by,  
made

In languages of stars and heavens and life,  
The senses life achieves, and wills and lusts

Up to the top of life, man and his sin,  
All is the writing of the name of God.

*Seeker.* Fantastic and quite out of date. But I  
Have cleaned my senses' panes of spider-work

That ignorance webs on them, know the world  
Not a blurred shadowy thing, that darkling peers

(Uncertain which is world, which window's dirt,)  
Into the mind, a ghost ; a real world mine.

I know this growth about me, stones, herbs,  
beasts ;

Stars and their golden games in the blue heaven  
I know, and the life that runs through all, and  
what

It runs towards ;—how the grand heats will be  
A stupid frost, and all the young lustful matter  
Decrepit, gone unhandsomely into crumbs.

And I, perhaps the sole of living minds,  
Know what this is,—the end of separation,  
The return to the Self of this happening.

I know that all, while here in their proper strength,  
Are present to the Self, I know that all  
Feel that the Self is ware of them,—Enough ;  
The Self under the world is real, the world  
Is therefore real in it. And how jumps this  
With what thou talk'st of a Name ?

*Sage.*

*Easily.*

As the meaning to the letters or the sound,  
So that, thou call'st a Self, is to the World ;  
This, the characters ; that, the Name indeed.

*Seeker.* Ay, I have heard thou art a poet. So

All trials such as I do on the world  
Are nothing to thy fantasy. And yet  
I failed, for that which I uncovered was  
No monger of the good and bad. Where then  
Wons he who holds the store of good and bad ?  
Is there another ? Canst thou tell me aught ?

*Sage.* I have not travelled much, but I have  
talkt

With those who in far regions use to fare.  
And they, among encounters and strange tales,  
Oft mention of a king whose palace lies  
Upon the edge of place, the verge of things.  
None ever found admittance at his gate ;  
All manner of war has spent itself against  
His cliffy walls, never an embassy  
Won to his presence. So the neighbouring kings  
(And great lords they) speak of him as their  
Lord.

I tell the rumours as I had them told.  
But it is said, Sin has been heard to boast



(Some have known Sin and have had speech with  
him)

He knew a postern, and the trick of its lock,  
Whereby he might, at any time, be in  
The house of the unseen king. It may be, then,  
A parley with this prince, could it be had,  
Were helpful to the shutting up of Sin ;  
As, if one prayed him set a hidden guard  
Behind the postern, which might seizure make  
Upon this insolent intruding Sin  
When next he dares creep into holy rooms.  
Or if, as I have thought, this unknown Power  
Be he that doth commission Sin, then ask  
For why is his employment, on what grounds  
Sin's warrant were withdrawn ; so strike with him  
A treaty. Maybe thou wilt find in him  
Thy monger of the good and bad. Come then  
And I will tell thee all that I have heard  
About the roads that go to this king's house.

## IV

### *The Seeker.*

Who is within this darkness ?

### *The Voice from Within.*

Whom thou seekest.

Adventure thou no further. Not for thee,  
If any road beyond my dwelling goes.

*Seeker.* Is there no wicket through this barrier'd  
gloom,  
Uncertainty wall'd against my ken ? Unlatch,  
If to thy place be any door.

*Within.* Not gloom,  
Impotence ; thou canst not understand my being.  
My shape and the dimensions it inhabits  
Are nought thy senses take, nor yet thy main  
Intelligence. Therefore my presence is  
Shut to them, dark. Theirs is the gaol, not mine.

*Seeker.* But whom I seek, thou art ?

*Within.* None other, I.

*Seeker.* Art thou the monger of the Good and  
Bad ?

*Within.* I am.

*Seeker.* Ah, I am come at my desire ;  
Now there is hope for thee, poor earth. Harken,  
Strange king ; knowst thou that Sin ?

*Within.* I know him well.  
He is now with me, here.

*Seeker.* What, is Sin rooft  
Under thy unplaced weather, within this weld  
Of powers unknowable, thy house ?

*Within.* Ay, here.

*Seeker.* But, when I left the world, he was  
among us,  
Busy.

*Within.* And still is in the world, and busy ;  
Yet is he here.

*Seeker.* I pray thee, keep him penn'd.  
I think thou canst not know how ill he does

Down there, among us men. Didst thou not  
think

Our life was to be clean, one purity,  
One beauty, as the rain drops make one bow,—  
Perchance, of all the many little minds,  
One brain, capable of thy knowledge ? Look,  
I pray thee, how Sin spoils thy hope, whate'er  
That was, but surely not the thing life is.  
Look down from where thou art, the Heaven, and  
see

His meddling ; how his enlargèd skill turns life  
Into a foul unseemly mess—no good  
A-hover o'er it now, nor able ever  
Unto a higher state of Time to reach,  
But still unshapen'd, crude, unworkt by Law  
Into another quality, to sprawl,  
Stuff not worthy Law's craft to fashion, waste  
Of being, unsound, that will not bear the tongs  
And hammering of thy workman, as all else  
Is forged and smitten into new kinds and better,—

That will not answer to his handling, give  
Obedience to his tools, being rotten, mixt  
With sullen wrong., Thus has Sin done with life,  
Beseech thee, pen him close, far off, O Lord.

*Within.* That would be hard to do.

*Seeker.* Yet surely thou  
Hatest this foul-toucht grimly Sin ?

*Within.* Sometimes  
Full bitterly I hate him, and sometimes  
He is my friend.

*Seeker.* O my hurt soul, thy friend ?  
But thou hast power over him ?

*Within.* It may be.

*Seeker.* And good and bad, these are thy  
mongery ?

*Within.* They are, as I have said.

*Seeker.* None else controls them ?

*Within.* None else controls or portions Good  
and Bad.

*Seeker.* Then thou art God ?

*Within.*

Ay, many call me so.

And yet, though words were never large enough  
To take me made, I have a better name.

*Seeker.* Then truly, who art thou ?

*Within.*

I am Thy Self.

## AN ESCAPE

## *An Escape*

Among mountains. *Idwal*, a poet.

*I* DWAL. A swift dark dream from the outer  
lands,

From the folk whose talk none understands,  
Along my smooth sleep travelling,  
Yet tampering not with my ken's rest,  
Past as undisturbingly  
As a night-jar o'er the quietude  
Of the clear'd middle of a pine-wood  
Seemeth to haunt the evening,  
And leave the blue air yet more whist.

And yesternight it haunted me ;  
Again, suddenly, quietly,



Shadowy wings above my clear sleep.  
But swift, so swift it might scarce be seen ;  
Not as with me it had to do,  
But eagerly, as though it flew  
From mystery to mystery,  
And my sleep lay in between ;—  
Once before, and yesternight.

So twice I have felt its noiseless flight ;  
Twice has my sleep been the road  
The dark message took in journeying  
From the one to the other secret reign ;—  
Out of the dark lying behind,  
Into that lying before, man's mind,  
My sleep was the only bridge for the thing  
Whereon to cross Reality.

But the third time, if it come again,  
A stranger, unkindly from the abode  
Of Beginnings sent to the place of Dooms,  
Shewing me thus so easily  
Way through the skirts of time to the glooms

That march both sides our bodily place,—  
My soul will up and give it chase ;  
Out of my sleep my soul will slip  
And ere that duty vanisheth  
I'll o'ertake its moth-wing'd speed.  
*And be it a bird softerlier fledge*  
Than white owl or brown night-jar,  
Be softer the down on the wing's edge  
Than combing crests of a snow-drift are  
Which the smooth wind holloweth,  
Of its shadowing I will be more aware  
Than a mirror is of a swoon'd man's breath,  
To find the guidance that I need.

I have great need of it : like a gaol'd man  
Am I, who having piteously craved  
The strange use of light, is all the more thereby  
Discomforted, to see how narrow his den—  
The walls surpris'd leering at him, and glistening  
Dank and unwholesome, sick with a waterish brash  
That dribbles down and clots the drooping beards

Of long white cellar-growth, hopeless of sun ;  
Qualm'd with loathing, to stare on his puddled bed,  
The unclean floor, and know how he mates on it.  
As it might be with such an one, with me.  
To look in on my being and the room  
Whereinto it is shut, I left the thorp  
(Whose morning peat-smoke hanging in the elms  
Is in my brain even now,—Ah, the last time !)  
And lived a winter in these treeless hills.  
And I, unwise, have let in light to my being ;  
The rash lamp has uncovered the thing it is.

I am not one being, but caged enmity :  
There are two kinds, shut by some sleight, although  
More jarring when they meet than fire and water,  
To fight like spider and scorpion in my mind.  
And 'tis a box so narrow they are in,  
Thrust face to face and knee to knee by the walls,  
Lidded and luted down with kneaded flesh,  
How can they loose or escape from the mewed coil ?

And so twy-spirited is my flesh. Now where

These souls began I know not, but there's one,  
I know, that has been in Eternity  
Before 'twas snared into this crafty body,  
Still sorrows after the life it followed there ;—  
To this soul, strangely and I know not how,  
The hills, and their great way of standing, gave  
Heart, and this soul has thrown the other down ;  
It stands, in the midst of its captivity,  
The master now : but it is still in the trap.

Rarely they planned this mind, the fowlers who  
Lured with a hidden bait that unware soul  
From out the unspoken region into the work  
Contrived to gin it, this spider-work of mind.  
For if that other hold it not for the trapper,  
Yet is there no way out of his skill, the mind.  
Who is the nooser of souls, the many-rumour'd,  
The shifty-named ? I think he's the same as  
Death :

Who profits by the trap, did he not make it ?  
The toil is rigged, and the soul lies fettered there,

And at his own good time the unheard Death  
Comes up behind and puts out dark hands, versed  
In the secret make of the mind, and takes the  
soul ;

But who the man they call Death is, and how  
He uses souls he nets, who ever told ?  
Not like, that he who goes so noiselessly  
And can make snares so well, hath good intent.  
But it may be, the captured in my flesh  
Is not to wait for Death, insanely struggling.  
Yet how to leave this place, and the difficulties  
About it set, the gapless and strong pound,  
The intricate mind, shutting the strayed soul fast ?  
For round the knowledgeable mind, which is  
The sounding coloured manifold plenteous world ;  
Round this that is lit, much unlit region of mind  
Investing lies, the dark unknown besieging  
The self-known mind, the world ; yet all is mind.  
Island it is, bewildered all about  
With thicketted hedges, fenced and hoarded close.

And if through these the mind's prisoner wins,  
then all

The marches of the mind are swamp and fen ;  
No footing there, but all a flinching ground :  
There thought and ken are shelving banks, washt  
loose,

Fretted from firmness, trembling half afloat  
In unknown tides, dark waters that emerge  
From out the unnoised deep beyond, and overwhelm  
Over the bars of place and time, intruding,  
Infesting with dim sloths of flood, and then  
Back to the darkness slipping, leaving gloomed  
Shaking and dangerous the mind's wet coast ;—  
There is no going through these lands.

And right

To my dear need, this limb of the otherwhere,  
This two nights' dream of mine, comes, easily  
Crossing the unsure dim untrodden parts  
Of foreign mind as if his wont was there.  
I think it is because the brawl is done

Within me, and he who has lost Eternity  
Has killed the other, the dream found my sleep  
So good to fare in on his messages.  
No sleep like mine for him, and a third time  
He'll use it so. By a strange awareness  
I feel he's looking from his place to try  
The passage of my sleep again. My want  
Of him and of his skilful travelling  
Will be awake even in my sleep, and hard  
After his speed the forgotten trapann'd thing  
That was the guest of Eternity once, will run  
Out of its gaol, this World, the mind of man,  
And be again free of its birthright house.  
I have but to sleep a little, and 'tis ended.

And yet these three last nights have I hung back  
From sleep, and delayed my delivering.  
No more : the sleep-hunger dims my aching brain,  
I have no strength against it. Scarcely am I  
Moved that this is my last sight of the hills  
And the morning that they wear so joyfully.

[*A Parson comes in.*

*Parson.* Good morning, lad : I thought I smelt  
your fire.

And how's the spring with you ?

*Idwal.* Spring ? Ay, is it Spring ?

*Parson.* Are you just out of bed ? But I have  
that

Will whet your wits. Some rascal of a tramp  
Has broken in your cottage, stript it bare.

*Idwal.* Why, that's a pity.

*Parson.* It is ; bare as my hand,  
The dog ! Well, I suppose you'll come down  
now

And help to catch the rogue. I'm sorry for you.

*Idwal.* It's sorry I am for that perverted tramp,  
As having gone from being the earth's friend,  
Whom she would have at all her private treats.  
Now with the foolery called possession he  
Has dirtied his own freedom, cozen'd all  
His hearing with the lies of ownership.



Yet something I have found of Life.

*Parson.*

Ay, fancies,

Poet's reveries. One must *see* life, though.

*Idwal.* I have come near to seeing Life.

*Parson.*

Up here ?

*Idwal.* Maybe it's not what you call seeing Life ;  
It served for me though. This is what it was.

I saw where walkt a Spirit in the skies,  
But not himself I saw, only a robe  
Large-folded, pale ; like rain seen from a height,  
When to the sightless going of the wind  
It clings, down narrows in the hills deep-hewn,  
A flapping steam gathered to the huge gait ;  
And shews a stature mightier than the mountains,  
Blotting them out, to such a spacious stride  
Waving, loose from the wind's shoulders in broad  
trail

So kingly drawn, crags underneath its hem.  
So, unsure as the wet wind's grey garment,  
I saw the Spirit walk, holding a storm

About him, wearing Life. Not whence it came,  
The downward misty shower of Life, I saw,  
Nor where it fell, but only that the Spirit  
Had put its falling as a vesture round him.

But listen now :

What is to let the Spirit putting off  
His wrap ? Suppose it be of no more use,  
And he unbrooch it at the neck, uncloak  
Himself of the web of carded waters, Life,  
Cumbersome grown, and lay it on the ground ?  
What then of Life ? A pool in a flat place  
Alone to mark where once was thrown in a heap  
The work of shimmer, a godly piece of craft,  
Carelessly, as outworn, taken away  
From being a fine spinning and a rayment,  
Its fashion lost, only the substance left  
Discarded, valueless, and not accounted,  
Out of it all the skill that gave it worth.  
See you ?—But does not this look dangerous ?—  
I would escape from Life.

*Parson.*

Then, I suppose,

You are after death ?

*Idwal.*

What use is Death to me ?

I spoke of Life as one broad tissued thing,

A whole, seamless and woven right across.

You, when you speak of life, mean still—Yourself

To my seeing, with a random light that lives

And shifts within the web, the cloak is shot ;

And where the gleam comes, there is thought and  
feeling,

But shadow overtakes the rippling sheen,

And then the vagrom tide sets back again.

Death is the light removed ; but you are still

In the same elements as when you lived,

When the light visited you ; although you change

The habit of the sun for a dark wont

You do but shift your nation. Yet have I hope,

Though tangled thus in Life, to win escape.

*Parson.* To one like you, who sees so widely,  
then,

The matter of Self must be a thing too small  
To be considered ?

*Idwal.* But because I have learnt  
Myself up here I would escape from Life.

*Parson.* Well, let us have your notions of the  
self.

*Idwal.* There is war in man.

*Parson.* Ay, you are not the first  
To find that out.

*Idwal.* As far as concerns me  
I am the first, however.

*Parson.* What is your war ?

*Idwal.* It is of two desires.

*Parson.* Right, flesh and soul.

*Idwal.* I know not what those two words  
mean. I say,

Desire of infinite things, desire of finite.

But what you call your soul is more than half

The finite longing, and the infinite

Is all a cripple and a starveling in you.

But still, though maimed, it keeps the struggle up,  
For 'tis the wrestle of the twain makes man.  
—As two young winds, schooled 'mong the slopes  
and caves  
Of rival hills that each to other look  
Across a sunken tarn, on a still day  
Run forth from their sundered nurseries, and  
meet  
In the middle air, forgetting that they meant  
A game there, each with his hold the other's flight  
Hampering, till their spent lockt hatred falls  
Troublesome on the lake, a foolish whirl  
Of crooked motions dinting upon the calm  
Which from its seat the sky had taught the waters ;  
So must these two desires, when they meet,  
Grapple so fast their either aim is lost,  
But in a wrangle round each other spin ;  
And each puts out his strength, not to go onward,  
But quite to baulk and hinder and capsize  
This insolent assault of the wrong desire :

And when they close, their struggle is called Man,  
Distressing with his strife and flurry the bland  
Pool of existence, that lay quiet before  
Holding the calm watch of Eternity.

—He has another name, and that is—Evil.

*Parson.* And neither ever gets the upper hand ?

*Idwal.* Ay, one not seldom—not the Infinite.

But if the finite longing has advantage  
And need not give his whole force to the fight,  
Then have you painters, singers,—I was one ;  
I am not now, the other is lord now.  
But till the time when, three months back, I came  
To this austerest earth, and left behind  
Orchards and plains, by that desire I was  
So mastered, that I never lookt at aught  
Except to herd Time's flocks : enough for me  
If on an early autumn afternoon  
The whole country air smelt burning, and the  
blue  
Wood-smoke loitered about the yellowing copse

And misted all the rides, and the earth seemed  
To catch her breath and with a frightened air  
Stand in the middle of her summer dance  
Surprised, still holding in her listless hands  
The fruits and flowers of her game, all tranced  
In a glad posture, but a wild appeal  
Setting her eyes and lips wide, what may mean  
This strange sweet mischief working in her breast,  
This longing of her limbs and heart for sleep.  
Or could I be in a steep-sided dene  
When the new gladness makes a straining song  
Sleek every speckled throat, and at my feet  
The turf is flower'd and makes sweet the breath  
Of cattle, and between the blue there hangs  
The golden green awakening of the oak,—  
That was enough. But this is ended now,  
And now the infinite desire within me  
So easily reigns, shy things that not belong  
To space or time may travel through me, free  
From meetings with the impudent questioning

Of thoughts that have to do with size or shape,  
Encounterings with matter, when it is  
The kind called Memory. My friend, a man  
Who has been way for these wandered strangers  
looks

After them gone, and sickens to be with them  
Out of the world, and out of measurement.  
Who knows our little world of din  
Beleaguered round with silences,  
Listens from out this noisy inn  
To catch some rumour of the peace,  
The quiet that around him is,  
Soon finds the talkative throng'd room  
Too close about him, too shut in,  
And yearns to go from light to gloom.

*Parson.* As you do, I suppose. But how is he  
To leave the world, since Death is of no use ?

*Idwal.* Better visitors there be  
That come to some few men than he,  
The noiselessly-shod murderer,



So skilled in using his kind knife.

And where they come there's no more fear  
Of staying in the toil of life,  
Or being in death's captivity.

*Parson.* Now listen to me, boy. You have not  
thought,

It may be, you are doing wrong ; but I,  
Who know, I tell you here and now, you are ;  
This talk of life as a haphazard thing,  
This strange distaste for being, is all wrong  
And gravely wrong.

*Idwal.* Before my winter here  
Wrong was a meaning to me. O, I went  
Much in large vision of the good and bad :  
The flies of hell blackening on the world,  
And angels doing chores up and down heaven.  
But lately quite another view of both  
I got : I learnt to go outside my mind,  
So saw the ministers of good and bad  
In their own proper likeness,—not as they

Earnestly masquerade before us men.

When to the world, which is man's mind, they  
come

They have a part to play : 'tis only a part ;

'Outside, they are one set,—and foolish talk

It is that says they hate each other there.

I slipt outside the world once, and there pried

Upon a festival ; fragrant it was

Of wine poured lavishly and spilt about

On the blue floor, like golden morning spilt

Over the sky ; and you breathed music there.

You cannot think how blithe a fellowship,

How frank, was over all that gathering.

Angels and devils made up the whole party,

Sitting lovingly paired, wing laid to wing,

Leathery close to feathery, bat and bird ;

Or dancing, wicked paws clasping white waists,

The delicate feet of angels twinkling bright

Among the hairy shins of fiends. 'Twas all

Clipping and dancing, good with evil, friends.

But where I go, nor good nor evil is.

*Parson (to himself).* Poor lad ! No use for me  
to talk with him.

Hazel perhaps can do it. I were best

Leave them together. *[Aloud.*

Hazel is close behind.

She needs must kneel among the primroses  
And lift them up where I had trod on them,  
Strange girl !

*Idwal.* Hazel is coming here, you said ?  
*(To himself.)* Ah, that stirs you, partner of mine ?  
Malingering were you ? Still alive ?  
But you shall not handle me again.

*[Hazel comes in. The Parson goes.*

*Hazel.* Good morning, brother. But how pale  
you look.

Your eyes, it is not health, such light in them  
And once they had a way of looking glad  
If they saw me come near. What is it, dear ?

*Idwal.* No, Hazel, you are nothing to me now,

Nor all the world, nor all the songs I made.  
I've found a better thing than you or these,  
And I am leaving you and all of them.

*Hazel.* Are you ill, brother ? dying ?

*Idwal.* Nor ill nor dying,

But bidding God be with you, for my hand  
Has found the latch it felt for, and the door  
Is opening now that lets me out of the house  
Of sky and earth ; the winds that are without  
Have learnt my name, and I must go to them.  
They breathe against the door, impatient for  
me ;

They have called to me, and I have hearken'd  
them :

Whether I would or no, they draw me now  
Beyond beyond, into the elder dark.  
And now I turn to you for the last time.  
I do not see your eyes again, Hazel.

*Hazel.* You must come back with us and we  
will nurse you.

You dying and the Spring come down again !

*Idwal.* I am not dying, Hazel. I will try  
To shew you how it is with me, Sweetheart—  
Ah, that was wont spake, not myself, believe me.  
Has it not been with you, all your spirit  
Held by some beauty of the earth, as if  
An outer voice startled you with your name,  
Taking you out of the Hour's snake-eyed charm ?—  
Like a child, all intent upon his game,  
Hears his dead mother softly calling him.  
So held was I. With fine deceits and toils,  
Nets of delight mastering all my limbs,  
Prisoner was I in beauty of the earth,  
And never knew my bondage : I heard no call.  
—If you lie still, you may be tied with ropes  
And be at ease. I know not why I paid  
Heed all at once to the disquieting voice.  
But when I did, my skin found, sure enough,  
The ropes were there. But that is done ; I step  
Out of the writhen cordage I have fought,

The strangling of the world I freed my limbs from,  
Thrown, see, at my feet, the foolish yarns.  
I could have sworn they lived, and had within  
    them

Striving, that made their bodies thicken and shrug  
And roughen scales to rasp my skin, and hold  
Against my labouring tight. What was mere rope  
While I lay still, soon as I strained at it  
Became a league of snakes. Well, they are dead,  
And the world's felony has failed with me.  
This was my winter's work up here, and now  
I'm free to take the bidding of the voice.

*Hazel.* What voice? O love, it's not been  
    good for you,

This lonely winter here among the hills.

*Idwal.* Hazel, you love me?—No, don't say  
    you do,

But if you do, I'd have you speak not quite  
So tenderly. (I had forgot that break  
Comes in her speaking when she's sorry,—at least

I thought that pang in me was dead that wont  
Leap in my heart at it, like a shrill string  
Across my soul shuddering. Pray God  
She speak not so again.) Will you not see  
We are all changed ?

This is not he you played with. I have been  
In furnaces up here. You need not bring  
Love to me now ; 'tis a tune I have no use for.  
What, will you still look so ? I tell you, he  
Whose thoughts had more obedience for you  
Than for the wind the barley has, and more  
Husht speaking at your way, he is done, spoilt.  
Upon that self, that reeved and wrangling twist  
Of forces, that fierce marriage of two hates  
Or loves (what we call love and hate are one),—  
That seeming quiet made of greeds, there toucht  
Release like fire, cheating the earth's hold,  
Blessedly saving me from consciousness.  
Out of the cinders it was bound in ran  
The secret of the ore, fined, ready for founding ;

And what was one thing, now is plainly two  
Though in one body kept ; the trial Self  
Withstood not, but bewrayed its making close,  
That it is twain. My Self has come to an end.  
And yet the consummation hangs ; to halve  
Wholly and all asunder put my being.  
But it will come ; I shall be loosed, and then  
Caught up by the hair out of the unseeing race  
At once I am no longer part of the world,  
But like the rush of waters o'er one drowned,  
The lapse of all the worlds slurs over me  
One fire, run into one broad streaming flame  
Going its unknown errand across space,  
And leaves me in the naked dark, alone,  
Large, and one of the first and latter things  
That were before limit and certainty  
And this old unhealth, from the beginning mixt  
Into them, Consciousness, the disease. And no  
No longer tied, not altogether freed,  
Will you come here to mischief me with love ?



Go from me. O if you but knew how I  
Am looking to be taken out of me,  
Out of the toil of Self, the fixity  
In mixture of these two unreconciled,  
Each with desire it sickens at and loathes  
Fastened to each,—you would not tease me thus.

*Hazel.* Ah, this is some false doing from outside :

You, whose glad senses stood so open, you  
Who never failed of welcome for the green  
And blue and gold of earth, who took in sun  
And the grey presence of the rain alike, to be  
Beauties within your heart, you to be harmed !—  
This very morning, as I left the house,  
I lookt up through the woods that hang behind,—  
(For nowhere in the world surely is blue  
So good for the heart as that of the early year  
Between black leafless trunks at a slope's top)—  
And looking up, lo, green against the blue !  
Spring in her first glad hurry through the land

Had left on thorn and branch tatters and light  
Frayings of her green careless robe. I thought,  
Here is the Spring, and he'll be with us soon.  
And then I thought of our delaying love.  
It's gone from you then ? But it's still with me.  
My sister has a baby, a week old,—  
To see her mothering it !—and I—never ?  
What am I saying ?—  
Love, do you hear me, love ?—Is that word  
Empty for you ? nothing alight left in it ?  
See if I fill it not with stars again.  
Look on me, and think, All of her is mine.  
Does it not burn you ? See, now I bare my arm.  
Is it not well done, a good work, this flesh ?—  
And it was done for you. (Look still on me.)  
O beauty of mine, catch me this man's spirit !  
—And if it be required of me, I go  
As far as sin to keep you. What care I  
Who calls it sin ? I am here charged by the earth  
To bribe you back to her, spend I my holiest.

I dare not disobey her. Why, I am  
The earth,—here in my being is the earth  
Longing for motherhood as she ever does ;  
She would be good to you if you would let her.  
—O the earth knows of her old enemy !  
Not in the frame of things, not where there is  
Comfort of light, nor any life but his,  
But alone in his unhappiness he sits  
Ill-favouredly eyeing her, bleak as his place,  
Looking unwholesome charm at whom he can.  
She knows not who he is, but that he turns  
And sours man's blood, making it be a bane  
Within his flesh, and an unkindly temper  
Towards his blessing. O be very ware ;  
The outer wrong has hold upon your soul  
To thief it out of you and away from me.  
It is a malice only : has it made  
Promises to you ? Did it use good words ?  
There is no trust in them. How can a thing  
Never had nature do you any good,—

You, made of earth, who fetched your life from  
her ?

But I have better than words for you. Look  
here,

I'll show you what the earth is.

You see a girl only ? I say, I am

The earth's disguise ; she has left to be hills

And to go in her ways of beautiful strength,

But hither on this errand for your loved love

Come out of being Spring, to stand before you

In me the whole desiring of the goddess,

And win you to her heart again, my heart.

Look ! the earth here stands open-armed to you :

Will you not try if the beating and the warmth

Of my life near to yours may not be good ?

But try it ! If here be no happiness,

It were easily left, and no harm done.

*Idwal.* Aha, who's master now ? Ask me not,  
dear,

Why I have been so dull and sluggarded.

Some demon, that was shut within my being,  
And long time lay at the bottom of my soul,  
Awoke and grappled with me unawares.  
Down, by some trick, he pulled me, for he meant  
To choke me and escape from out my soul.  
All this time he has kept me under, hands  
Tight on my throttle, lest I spoke. But now  
Your voice surprised him with dismay, and I  
Remembered that this soul is mine by right,  
Heartened by you ; now am I uppermost  
And he is under my tread : 'tis his turn now.  
Ah ! 'tis the same as ever it was,—the brow  
Like day beginning, frank, the loopt hair winds  
Are friendly with. Surely for loving more  
Than man you were made, Hazel. It is as if  
The moonlight came in a borrowed body once  
For lip-love to a man, that you want me.—  
As new to me and strange it is as when  
First I dared take and hold her hand, brown  
As a meadow-pipit's egg, and holding found



About me a dark horror. What his land  
Or folk is, know I not, but he was near  
To naught is in the world.

And he, the fiend who fought me, eagerly lookt  
For the next coming of his goblin friend,  
And surely he would come along with sleep.  
Three nights I have not slept.

*Hazel.* O my poor boy !  
What, haunted ?—and I thinking of you all  
winter

Making the stature of the lifted hills  
Felt in that song of yours. And now—O come,  
Be in my arms at home again and see  
If you'll not sleep there. Come !

*[She persuades him to her breast, and he sleeps  
awhile. Then her father, the Parson, returns.*  
*Parson.* Asleep ? That's good. A sound sleep,  
too.

*Hazel.* Father,  
I'm frightened. Half an hour ago he sighed

And turned, shuddering. Put your hand on his  
heart ;

I have not dared to.

*Parson.*

There's no need for that ;

He is not sleeping. Come away, my dear.

—Thank God she's dazed with it. Send she  
keep so,

And I may get her home.—Come on, my girl.

I wonder what he died of.



PEREGRINUS

# *Peregrinus*

*Persons.*

*Peregrinus Proteus.*

*Marcon, a Christian.*

*Chorus of Corinthian youths.*

## ARGUMENT.

PEREGRINUS, a man notable when the Christian Church was young, having famously lived a wicked life, publicly burnt himself in Greece.

LUCIAN has left one account of the manner of his dying. Another account is here set forth.

## BEFORE THE PYRE.

*Peregrinus.*

Much bruit have I about the world, and fame,  
A baying hound, hath never left my sleuth

Nor left to noise the air with feats of mine.  
But to be known have I much viciousness  
Performed, and gone in lust for many years.  
And now I come to burn myself, and this  
Shall be the famousest of all my deeds.  
I mean to be a flame and a flying smoke,  
A wide astonishment to the dim minds  
That hamper all the world. But I escape  
From that obsequious fame that dogged my life  
Yelping, a voice to please ignorant ears.

Moreover, as I burn my living flesh,  
I write a message which, if men will read  
And follow in the way I link them on,  
Will make more joy and beauty in the earth  
Than all the hopes of Heaven and fears of God.  
When men shall fear their Selves, and after that  
Worship their Selves (for worship's the one way  
To make a thing sacred and worthy worship)  
Men will have come to their full stature then.

Therefore I go into the pains of fire  
To shew the world a symbol of such worship :  
Nor can I any other way now give  
Clean priestly service to my sacred part.  
This Marcon too shall preach me to the lands,  
I the Nehushtan and the Moses he.  
Lo, Marcon comes, and up the ladder I  
Reluctant climb : I tread no more on grass,  
The earth shall no more be a road for my feet.  
But I am climbing higher than this frame  
Of timber, higher than any flame shall lunge,

When it is burning me, I climb aloft,  
And draw man's thought towering after me.  
It is not anguish of the fire comes now,  
But the mighty anguish of becoming holy  
After long dwelling in the shops of lust.

Air, thou fresh pleasant creature, dear to breathe,  
Wilt thou become a fierceness in my lungs ?  
And thou, dusk evening, shalt soon be torn  
With blaze, and reel at the manner of my end.  
Here am I at the top. Lonely it seems ;—  
And I am hung over the risk of death.

*Marcon.*

A hateful thing is friendship false ; yet good  
And profitable may it be if God  
Bends, as he can, the crooked ill to straight.  
I was a friend to Peregrinus,—friend  
In seeming : with the falsehood I serve God.  
This man, to draw the moths o' the world to his  
Strange lores, here willingly will burn himself,

A death uncouth, to take the world aghast ;  
And worse than the loose heats and smokes of his  
    life

Will be the pestilent reek of his wild death.  
I must prevent him perfecting his death.

Godless and fraudulent he lived : his flesh  
So trampled on his mind, no doubting knew  
Great-lusted Peregrinus, but he sinned  
His life away, not pausing 'twixt his bouts ;  
He was mere ravening of the baser kind,  
Till in these storms unto a vile harbour  
This poor ship drave, into the shelter of hell,  
And rides calm, anchor'd to the devil's heart.

O, I have sicken'd at his blasphemy,  
Applauding it and adding my own wit  
(Which God forgive) to keep him in those ways.  
He holds he hath a better tongue than Christ  
To make men leave the dirt and stand upright ;  
And, lest he found a head to dupe indeed,  
I as disciple swallowed all his teaching,

His crazy watchwords (how I spew them out)  
Self-serving, self-delight, ay, and self-worship.  
And madly he will give himself to stand  
In fire until he chars to death, for hopes  
Of startling all the unaware dark minds  
To manfulness, with a new faith the world  
Rumouring farther abroad than Galilee  
And Olivet have gone about the mouths  
Of nations, and are sacred in men's ears :  
And flames perhaps look nobler than a cross.

God gave me cunning ; and I swore to be  
The preacher of his notions. He will die  
Trusting his words to me. I swore besides  
From Corinth to collect with choice a sage  
Assembly of staid witnesses. For them  
He waits, for them I have swept up  
A ribald crowd of youths ; well known to these  
By fame is Peregrinus. I have said  
That he will burn himself lest he should lose  
(For he perceives men's ears grow tired of him)

His infamy, and come to an obscure end :  
But openly, in concourse, he will set  
The doors of death on fire, and burst a way  
By flames through the forbiddance of his flesh,  
And win great mention in the talk of feasts.  
This—sport it is to them—they come to view  
With glee unruly ; yea, behold they come,  
Less gentle pack than wolves, announced by wine  
Upon the air, laughter and flown gibing,  
The snarling happiness of cruel men.  
How have men's mouths become so terrible ?

*Chorus.*

Two here alone ;  
Have we been fooled, we are enough  
To snatch the jest from these,  
And with what merry injuries we please  
Bind it on them.  
'Tis like we shall be entertained  
Whatever case befall.



When God sent down strict duties  
To school His men, the kinder Devil sent  
Pleasures in a gay troop ;  
Tunefully they dance over the heart ;  
And of them all the queen is Cruelty,  
The subtlest, the least sensuous,  
Keener than keen odours,  
Fiercer than fierce wine in the brain,  
Reaching into the life of us farther than love,  
A rapture with no satisfaction in it,  
Making the lungs gasp, forgetting to breathe,  
And the heart stand still, trembling.

But also it is gravely thought  
That pleasures be indeed from God's hands  
To be a means of climbing from the earth.  
And not amiss that city would be judged  
The princeliest, the nearest heaven,  
Which had stept up all rungs of lower pleasures,  
And had abandoned all the sorts of delight  
For this amazement of the nerves,

This sharp delicious ransack of the brain,  
This ravishing wild piracy of the soul,  
Cruelty.

This need not crawl laborious through a sense,  
This hath no masterful appetites  
Warily to serve, capricious gate-keepers,—  
Now welcoming in pleasure to the mind  
As high-birtht lady they are glad to see  
Coming to cheer their lord,  
Now shutting sulky doors  
Before her entrance, calling her ill-names,  
Saying they are sick,  
Cannot rise to draw the bolts,  
Nor would let her tempt  
Their lord, the mind, to harlotry.

But Cruelty hath no gates,  
Nor qualmish porters in her way :  
Though she get help from sense,—  
For struggle, eyes,  
Ears for cries,

Smelling when we use the fire,—  
Yet in the main she is mere intelligence ;  
And a dull thing seemeth sense  
And sensual delight,  
To one who has let the exquisite  
Passion of cruelty trouble his heart  
To blithe laughter, and learnt  
Skill in tormenting.

To me in warm love busied, or in cups,  
A whisper came,  
A quiet fame,  
That Peregrinus would all willingly  
Torture his living limbs with fire.  
Then I arose from soft enjoyment,  
From wine and lust and hours of scent,  
To try the thinnest highest element  
Delight can use for being, Cruelty ;  
Hail, Marcon, we are come,  
Hail to thy crazed victim.  
Pay us now our jest, this man's torment.

*Mar.* Mayhap I yet may use persuasion  
On him. My master, Peregrinus there !

*Per.* Art eager then ? art thou as ready as I ?

*Mar.* The worshippers are come : they wait  
the priest.

*Per.* And soon the priest shall put on holy  
robes.

*Mar.* Not a soft weaving, such as loves the skin.

*Per.* But golden, but a glory, the wealth of  
flame.

*Mar.* Shall man not love his life, but prefer  
death ?

*Per.* He shall love Self better than he loves life.

*Mar.* And yet thou say'st, death utterly scatters  
Self.

*Per.* Nothing it matters if that be or not.

*Mar.* How pleasant in the beating heart is life.

*Per.* But if a man hath left to rule his lusts,  
Which are to teach him wonder only,—fed  
And pamper'd them unwisely, till he knows

Beasts of desire are in him, bloated things,  
And his imagination is no more  
Than a byre full of moaning appetites,  
And danger is that they may break out wild,  
Root up and dung the orchard of his soul  
And in foul mischief plough it and stamp to mud,  
And the lord Self be under maniac hoofs,—  
Then better than such outrage is to die.

*Mar.* What gain to Self is that, if Self is  
murder'd ?

*Per.* The gain of standing upright to the end.

*Mar.* Fixed, then, thou art to burn life out of  
thee ?

*Per.* Yes, and to be the king of all my being.

*Mar.* O, but it is a dreadful way to death.

*Per.* The worse the pain, the kinglier am I.  
Hast thou forgot, moreover, that this act  
Is as an angel standing upon earth  
Amid a burning secrecy of wings,  
Summoning hearts to heed news out of Heaven ?—

“ Take care that no harm come, Man, to thy Self,  
And death is better than to be defiled.”

I am to announce the holiness of Self ;  
I am the trumpet, but thou art the herald.

*Mar.* Stop, I will sit no more beside thy danger ;  
Burn thyself as thou wilt, but now at last  
Know I detest, spit out, and fear thy doctrine,  
As God does thee. Thou art the Devil’s friend :  
Burn now and to eternity. I am  
A Christian.

*Per.* A slave. O lying tongue  
I half suspected this. Love thou thy malice,  
I am not harmed. This serious company  
Shall now proclaim my ending to the world.

*Chorus.* He comes to speak. Look well for  
fear in him,  
For that’s the seasoning in a man’s torment.

*Per.* O men, desire no great farewell of me.  
I have strapt indeed a harness against fear  
Upon me, but he shoots many arrows.

And there's no breast given as target to him  
His sharp archery may not wound at length,  
However forged about with the mind's brass.  
Yet must I tell you why I burn myself.

Behold, the world and all the beings in it  
A multitude of waves upon a sea.  
But as a chance of flows and currents often  
Seizes the watery substance into whirl,  
And in the sea doth separately exist  
That whirl, so is the kind of man in the world.  
Or scatter a pool of quicksilver and see  
How easily the drops are one again ;  
But if one drop have rolled among some dirt,  
The skin it now hath keeps it out of the rest.  
So is man's nature floating in the world,  
Having acquired a dirt of strange desires  
To keep him still unmixt with the one substance.  
Take not too closely, though, that " dirt " : I  
mean

Only to nail upon your memories

This ruling word : how utterly apart  
Man, by the Self he hath, is from the world.

*Chorus.* What, is he teaching? Come, let's  
have some tales

Among ourselves.—It seems a well-built pyre.

*Per.* So then there is a new creature in the old  
Draught of eternal flowing substance down  
The spacious alley of the will of God,—  
Gathered perplexity of substance, called  
The Self of Man : and let it be a boat  
Steered by strong wilful oars about the tide.

It is well said, Be good and love mankind ;  
But it is better said, Be beautiful  
And love yourselves : for this contains the other.  
How can you love what is not beautiful ?  
I would have each man passionately in love  
With his own Self : see that it take no harm,  
And let not the base breathing of the world,  
The nuzzling friendship of such mouths as munch  
Garbage, come tarnishing your silver thought.



The one sure thing in all the world is Self ;  
See that it be a Self worthy the having,  
And namely one that is never satisfied  
With its own excellence. I know a way  
The kind of Man may be a holy kind,  
And dress itself in beauty as the sun  
Wears naturally, excellent in the heavens,  
For self-delight his golden gear of virtue.

For none who love and honour their own selves  
Would do the frauds, malices, sneakings, lies,  
The huffing impudence and bragg'd lechery,  
That cause the life of man to smear a scum  
Over the world as if a sewer had burst.  
But cease to stand about the swampy earth  
And grieve to find the mud holding your ankles  
When you would seek, following a light-foot  
dream,  
The good firm land that has not been in storms  
Of evil rain, nor been drowned nastily.  
Follow no dreams ; try not to mend the world,

But mend yourselves. Ye love unthriftilly  
God and your neighbour ; call in your rambling  
love,

Ye need it all yourselves to shore your wills  
From resting on the soft uncleanly sin.

When you have thus grown strong (and you  
shall find

Mercy the prop to make a soul most strong),

Then you shall join me in this mystery,

Self-worship, and not die (as I must do)

To enter it. For worship can make holy,

And man shall be a sacred thing at last

When difficultly he learns to be the priest

Of his own Self, lighting clean fires of worship

With every faculty of flesh and soul.

And henceforth in the world shall walk a ghost

With the appearance of blown fire, to haunt

The ease of men, and amaze them out of comfort.

For here I lift up to the world a token,

A burning type of high self-love, the world's

Instance of the self-worship's ritual.  
I have sinned the unforgivable sin against  
Myself, rendering body and mind unfit  
To be inhabited by a sacred thing,  
And profit ye thereby. For greatest wrong  
Compels this greatest act of worship from me.  
I made of my desires not ecstasy  
But lust ; as rooms of mere delight  
I lived in passions, not seeing that they were  
Porches only into wonder, and made  
To be past through, but not inhabited.  
And like a deadly climate they have grieved  
And spoilt my nature, crept into my marrow,  
And made intolerable wrong in my soul.  
But I will not have myself so dismayed  
Or with wild infamous handling hurt and pusht  
From being throned. I come to burn myself.  
And as I stand naked before the hot  
Mouth of the hungry fire, and am devoured,—  
As by its dreadful love I am enjoyed,

And have no being except pain until  
Perfectly I become the mate of flame,  
Then know that I with golden voice announce  
And sound over the world from midst my bright  
Rapture out of dishonourable life,  
That henceforth in the hearts of men shall be  
Their own worship : Self is the sacred thing.  
Now let thy torches be prepared, Marcon.

*Chorus.* Oft have I wisht  
I had beheld the famous sport  
The King of Egypt gave unto his court,  
When she, the fairest of his wives,  
Thinking she was not husbanded enough,  
In action went the same way as her thought.  
Her the king gave choice,—on swords to die  
Or else to have her face publicly  
Tortured into hideousness.  
And joy ran down the anxious streets  
When the king let cry amid blown horns  
His mercy, that her beauty should be murder'd,

But she might keep her life.  
They say the thing went happily :  
It might have been a panther  
Beneath the struggled men,  
So spat and yelled the lady,  
Bit and scratched, butted and kickt,  
Tore at the irons and shook hands with burning  
To save a little of her look ;  
After, when the heat-loosen'd flesh set firm,  
Her lips were ludicrously writhed.  
But this thing promises a greater joke  
Than that Egyptian quip.  
And after this I think I shall not wish so  
much  
That I had seen her face,  
Her undelighted grin,  
When first they trapt her visage in a gin  
Of white-hot wires and were ingenious  
To screw with branding her neck-sinews  
Into a rigid wrying tackle,

And the smoke of her own flesh was tangled in  
her hair.

*Per.* Friends, friends, good friends, it was a  
jest.

*Chorus.* Now it begins ; now mark him well,  
dear souls.

*Per.* What fool hath taken the ladder ? Bring  
it back.

*Chorus.* You see, 'tis as the wise heads say. A  
beast

But gives, howe'er elaborately killed,  
A single pleasure. But a man gives twain,—  
Both killing and ridiculous fear of death.

*Per.* The ladder, Marcon ; dear Marcon, bring  
me the ladder.

What art thou doing with that torch, thou fool ?  
Keep off, take care of all those flying sparks,  
Stamp it into the sand ;—no, no, good Marcon,  
Bring it not near the faggots, see how it spits  
Hot resin. Hold it away, curst fool, away.—

You there, Corinthians, hold that murderous man ;  
Bind him, throttle him, friends, and let me down.

*Chorus.* This is the best : on us he calls to save.

*Per.* Have ye not had enow of jest ? and more  
Will come ; hereafter I will make myself  
Your banquets' laughing stock, the clown of  
feasts,

But only let me down.—I will not die.

*Chorus.* Thou wilt not die ! Fool, dost thou  
think we have left

Our night's pursuits, and will not see thee die ?  
Marcon, light thou the pyre, or we will hurl  
Thee into it, and burn the pair of you.

*Per.* Ah,—now I see what bloody men ye are ;  
And I must die mockt at by such a herd,  
And they will make a jest of me over the world,  
No honourable report. Marcon, too,  
Forswears his part ; into what strange darkness  
Has been betrayed the shining of my death ?—  
That would have been a medicine for all minds

Enfeebled with the bane of help from Heaven  
And roused them from the pallets of sick ease  
Which self-mistrust, that priestly surgery,  
Drove them to lie on ; but not now, not now  
I burn myself, like hyssop, for the world.  
What then ? Why, it is as it should be now.  
For now privately I shall do my worship  
And have my own approval, no stared applause,  
Far better rite. To my own holiness,  
To my Self, is all my being sacrificed :  
I am the Champion against my own wrong.  
Marcon, my heart is braced ; yare with thy fires.

*Chorus.* Little flames, merry flames, modest low  
chucklings,

This is but maidenly pretence of shyness ;  
Little flames, happy flames, what are these  
secrets

You so modestly whisper one another ?  
Do we not know your golden desires,  
And the brave way you tower into lust



Mightily shameless ?

Why do you inly skulk among the timber ?

Stand up, yellow flames, take the joy given you ;

Resins and spunkwood, faggots and turpentine,

A deal of spices, a great cost of benzoin,

Everything proper for your riot, O flames.

Leap up the bavins,

Run up these joys we have built like a stair for you ;

Fuel lies topmost waiting your frenzy

Better than sap, better than tar,

For you to kindle.

'Tis flesh and blood, life and feeling,

Desperate moisture besieged by your heat,

Silly resistance to your golden desires,

Agony wrestling with pitiless glee,

Mad Peregrinus ;

Rarely delightful to you, I guess.

—Ha, didst hear ?

A cry, like a frightened bird, flew out,

But sudden it stopt, as a hunter

Shot the wild flight.

Flames, flames, rejoice, ye have found him !  
Up with you now, stroke him first and singe him  
gently,

Call out some vagaries from him,

And then take hold of the man

And tie his soul up in torment.

Ah, but I wish I could be as flames are ;  
No more deal in such peddlings of desire  
As senses cheaply buy,  
But quite become desire  
As you do, flames.

*Mar.* Now I have done good service to the  
Lord

With my false friendship ; for the man is gone  
And his hugg'd wickedness along with him  
To be unseen, and no more to God's eyes  
Hateful, smother'd beyond all offending  
In violent places full of the old worm.  
O flame, O nature prosperous for the Lord,

O captain over the angers of just Heaven,  
Have now thy hottest, holiest zeal, and turn  
The mercy of the air to indignation.  
Slacken not thou from whiteness, be not red  
Nor even gold, but white and terribly white,  
The utter purity thou hadst from God  
When he began to war. Be fiercely good,  
Till thou hast lickt this evil up, and made him  
Flakes of fire in the night. But thou, O Lord,  
Let me be pleasant and delightful to thee ;  
Forget not me, if I have served thee here.  
And thou, blue-kirtled Mary, who on earth  
Didst nourish God, an infancy of flesh  
Taking the simple milk of thy dear breast  
Instead of spiritual thrones adoring ;  
When he, thy Son, down to his promist judgment  
Rides out of Heaven upon Eternity  
Harnesst under his hands, and with one stroke  
Of wielded holiness on this clotted nature  
Breaks up mortality and turns to ghost

The whole fixt starry creature of the world,  
An universal Easter of all being,  
Mary, look that I come into the light.

*Chorus.* Did the much-wander'd Peregrinus—  
Or the much-lying ('tis the same)—  
Say ever he had seen the Phœnix burning ?  
Into those brave tales of his,—  
The hairy giants who desired him for meat,  
The Northern dragons that he slew,  
And showed the tooth of one,  
(But that, I have heard, came from an alligarth's  
jaws :

He found it dead and rotting once,  
And fought with nothing fiercer than a stink,)—  
Into those excellent impudences  
Surely the Phœnix came,  
Shrieking as the flames tired upon her,  
And all the Arabian air  
Full of the messages of burning myrrh ?  
For methinks he would be making now

An image of such vision.

But when these ashes whiten,  
Will a famous ghost spring out,  
Spurning the glow-hearted logs  
Till into sparks they lighten,  
A more perpetual life ?

Ay, in immortal laughter,  
Like a beetle overcome in amber,  
We will catch his ghost.

See, thou crazy ghost,  
Lovingly we have limed thee  
In imperishable gum of merriment,  
Tomb thou never shalt escape.

At many a feast, when chaplets are awry  
And tipsy spilth is wasting half the wine  
And all the lanterns sway,

Thou shalt be handed round and praised  
More than Atlantic pearl or topaz out of Meroë,  
Thou precious ghost, safe from time  
In a clear sepulchre of laughter.

Ah ! Ah !

How greatly flared the pyre,  
With what a roar its framework fell,  
The scaffolding all loosed with fire.  
Did see, my friends, that neck of flame  
Leap from these ended agonies ?  
There is a crimson dazzle in my eyes ;  
Was there not a mighty swag of smoke  
Like, most like, a big unnatural bat ?  
It was over us, with sparkling eyes,  
And large hollow wings outspread ;  
Did they not flap heavily  
Like wings of a demon huge vampire  
Bloated with sleepy blood ?  
Did it not hiss and scream ?—  
Or was it moisture of a pine made steam  
And forcing through the wood ?  
'Tis likely, for as I lookt again  
Nothing was there to abash the stars,  
And all quite vain

Of smoke the golden flames did spire.

Well, we will take thy lesson,  
As near as we can get to it.  
The world is a muddy place,  
Mankind is an unpleasant race ;  
What shall we do with our time here ?  
There is no good answer at all,  
Save this, the thing of most delight,  
For which all, except fools, must fight,  
Is to be known and pointed out in the street.  
Fame must be bought at any price,—  
Folly, ignomy, or vice,  
It matters not, so fame is bought.  
And better it is to die as thou hast done  
Than to live unknown.

*Mar.* O stop this foolish noise, you murderers,  
For such you are who swarmed to this affair  
Merely to see him die, and would not help  
him.

*Chorus.* Look at this angry man. Who was it  
told

The city of this jest ? And didst thou help ?

*Mar.* I let him die because—you will not take  
me—

His thoughts burnt like wicked sulphur, and  
spoilt

God's pleasure in the fragrant prayers of saints.

*Chorus.* And how did his burning flesh smell to  
thy god ?

Agreeably to his nose ?

*Mar.* Peace, insolent mouth.

*Chorus.* But why should Peregrinus burn him-  
self ?

*Mar.* Because he thought to loose over the  
earth

Widely a running blasphemy, and dip

Men's thoughts in his, as in a vat of brimstone.

*Chorus.* But this is wild talk. Did he not die  
for fame ?



*Mar.* Not as you think. But, friends, I would  
not have

This thing much known ; tell it not commonly.

*Semi-chorus.* The world shall hear, the world  
shall laugh,

And he who paints with nimblest fancy

What on the top was hid,

How flame and smoke leapt down his throat and  
tore

His inwards with convulsing storm,

The hideous end of his vain life,

He shall most jocular hearers find,

Raise the merriest laughter.

And if this Marcon spread abroad

Any of this notion,

That Peregrinus had some other purpose

Than a mere craze for infamy

So dying in this manner,

He shall be laught to scorn and for a fool

Pointed at by mockers.

*Chorus.* In olden time they held it was the gods  
Plagued to madness such as he  
Who sought with shouted fame  
To make the world his temple ;  
And, though now we have no gods,  
Strangeness visits still brains of men,  
As shooting-stars furrow clear skies  
Into unusual lights.  
But what care whence it comes ?  
For being here, good it is for laughter.  
It is unwise to question,  
But it is very wise to laugh ;  
Behold, gone is Peregrinus,  
Of his mad death only a smoulder left.  
Now never was there in the world a game  
So merry as this ravishing  
Death of Peregrinus.

## POEMS

## POEMS

### *Soul and Body*

#### *Body.*

ART thou for breaking faith, after these years,  
These many married years  
Wherein we have ourselves so well delighted ?  
Why art thou sick ? Art thou beginning fears  
That our dear joys have been unholy things ?  
Trust me, since we have been so long plighted,—  
Whate'er be this white worship thou dost mean  
To reach on these unlucky wings,—  
Thou wilt miss the wonder I have made for thee  
Of this dear world with my fashioning senses,  
The blue, the fragrance, the singing, and the  
green.

And thou wilt find, not having me,  
Crippled thy high powers, gone to doubt  
Thy indignation and thy love, without  
Help of my lust, and the anger of my blood,  
And my tears.

Try me again ; dost thou remember how we stood  
And lookt upon the world exultingly ?  
What is for rapture better than these ?—  
Great places of grassy land, and all the air  
One quiet, the sun taking golden ease  
Upon an afternoon ;  
Tall hills that stand in weather-blinded trances  
As if they heard, drawn upward and held there,  
Some god's eternal tune ;  
I made them so, I with my fashioning senses  
Made the devoted hills : have their great patientces  
Not lent thee any health of ecstacy ?  
Or when the north came shouting to the beach,  
Wind that would gag in his throat a lion's speech,  
And spindrift with a whining hiss went by

Like swords,—wert thou not glad with me ?  
O who will lodge thee better than I have done  
In exultation ?—I who alone  
Can wash thee in the sacring of moonlight,  
Or send thee soaring even that above  
Into the wise and unimaginable night,  
The chambers of the holy fear,  
Or bring thee to the breasts of love.

*Soul.*

Dear Body, my loved friend, poor thanks have I  
For all this service. As if fires had made me  
clean,  
I come out of thy experience,  
Thy blue, thy fragrance, thy singing, and thy  
green,  
Passions of love, and most, that holy fear :  
Well hast thou done to me with every sense.  
But there's for me a fiercer kind  
Of joy, that feels not, knows not, deaf and blind :

And these but led to it, that we did try  
When we were person, thou and I ;  
Woe for me if I should dare  
Partake in person now I see  
The lights of unware ecstasy.  
I must not in amazement stay,  
Henceforth I am for a way  
Beyond thy senses, beauty and fear,  
Beyond wonder even.  
I want neither earth nor heaven,  
I will not have ken or desire,  
But only joy higher and higher  
Burning knowledge in its white fire  
Till I am no more aware  
And no more saying " I am I,"  
But all is perfect ecstasy.

## *The Trance*

LORD GOD, I saw thee then ; one mind  
last night,  
Met thee upon thy ways.  
I was upon a hill, alone ;  
My drudgèd sense was aching in amaze :  
Into my thought had too much gone  
The inconceivable room of the blue night,—  
The blue that seems so near to be  
Appearance of divinity,—  
And the continual stars.  
I was afraid at so much permanence,  
And was in trouble with vastness and fixt law.  
All round about I saw  
The law's unalterable fence,



And like forgery of shining bars  
The stresses of the suns were there,  
Keeping, in vastness prisoner,  
My thought caged from infinity.

And then, suddenly,—  
While perhaps twice my heart was dutiful  
To send my blood upon its little race,—  
I was exalted above surety  
And out of time did fall.  
As from a slander that did long distress,  
A sudden justice vindicated me  
From the customary wrong of Great and Small  
I stood outside the burning rims of place,  
Outside that corner, consciousness.  
Then was I not in the midst of thee  
Lord God ?

A momentary gust  
Of power, a swift dismay  
Putting the infinite quiet to disarray,  
A thing like anger or outbreking lust,

A zeal immeasurably sent,—  
So Law came and went,  
And smote into a bright astonishment  
Of stars the season of eternity,  
And grazed the darkness into glowing lanes.  
Swiftly that errand of God's vehemence,  
The passion which was Law, slid by,  
Carrying surge of creatures, fiery manes  
Of matter and the worldly foam  
And riddles of transgressing flame ;  
So the Law's kindled shakings came  
A moment, and went utterly.  
And seemed to be no more  
Than if through the eternal corridor  
Of emptiness a sob did roam,  
Or a cry out of a fearful ecstasy.

## *Ceremonial Ode*

*Intended for a University.*

### I.

WHEN from Eternity were separate  
The curdled element  
And gathered forces, and the world began,—  
The Spirit that was shut and darkly blent  
Within this being, did the whole distress  
With blind desire after spaciousness.  
Into this yearning, strictly bound by Fate  
And closely natured, came like an open'd grate  
At last the Mind of Man,  
Letting the sky in, and a faculty  
To light the cell with lost Eternity.

## II.

So commerce with the Infinite was regained :

For upward grew Man's ken,

Laying foundations deep in the ancient fen

Where other life helpless and prone remained.

With knowledge painfully quarried and hewn fair,

Platforms of lore, and many a hanging stair

Of strong imagination, Man has raised

His Wisdom like the watch-towers of a town ;

That he, though fastened down

By Fate, be with its cruelty not amazed,

But be of outer vastness greatly aware.

## III.

This, then, is yours : to build exultingly

High, and yet more high,

The knowledgeable towers above base wars

And shameful surges reaching up to lay

Dishonouring hands upon your work, and drag

Down from uprightness your desires, to lag  
Among low places with a common gait.  
That so Man's mind, not conquered by his clay,  
    May sit above his fate,  
Inhabiting the purpose of the stars,  
And trade with his Eternity.

*(Revised for the Jubilee of the University of  
Leeds, 1925.)*

*“ All Last Night .*

A LL last night I had quiet  
In a fragrant dream and warm :  
She had become my Sabbath,  
And round my neck, her arm.

I knew the warmth in my dreaming ;  
The fragrance, I suppose,  
Was her hair about me,  
Or else she wore a rose.

Her hair, I think ; for likest  
Woodruffe ’twas, when Spring  
Loitering down wet woodways  
Treads it sauntering.

No light, nor any speaking ,  
Fragrant only and warm.  
Enough to know my lodging,  
The white Sabbath of her arm.

*December 31st*

WHAT is he hammering there,  
That devil swinking in Hell  
O, he forges a cunning New Year,  
God knows he does it well.

Mill and harrow and rake,  
A restless enginery  
Of men and women to make  
Cruelty, Harlotry.



## *Hope and Despair*

S AID God, " You sisters, ere ye go  
Down among men, my work to do,  
I will on each a badge bestow :  
Hope I love best, and gold for her,  
Yet a silver glory for Despair,  
For she is my angel too."

Then like a queen, Despair  
Put on the stars to wear.  
But Hope took ears of corn, and round  
Her temples in a wreath them bound.—  
Which think ye lookt the more fair ?

*“Roses can wound”*

R OSES can wound,  
But not from having thorns they do  
most harm ;

Often the night gives, starry-sheen or moon'd,  
Deep in the soul alarm.

And it hath been within my heart like fear,  
Girl, when you were near.

The mist of sense,  
Wherein the soul goes shielded, can divide,  
And she must cringe and be ashamed, and wince,  
Nor in appearance hide  
Of rose or girl from the blazing mastery  
Of bared Eternity.

## *The Fear*

AS over muddy shores a dragon flock  
Went, in an early age from ours discrete,  
Before the grim race found oblivion meet ;  
And as Time harden'd into iron rock  
That unclean mud, and into cliffs did lock  
The story of those terrifying feet  
With hookèd claws and wrinkled scale complete,  
Till quarrying startles us with amaz'd shock :  
  
So there was something wont to pass along  
The plashy marge of early consciousness.  
Now the quagmires are turned to pavement  
strong ;  
Those outer twilight regions bold I may  
Explore,—yet still I shudder with distress  
To find detested tracks of his old way.

# *Indignation*

## *An Ode.*

### I.

THERE was an anger among men  
In the old days ; and it was as a sword  
In the hands of the Spirit then  
To hew the ambusht villainy out of his path  
And in its thievish lurking kill the fraud.  
And all the greeds of hell kept to their den  
When the Spirit in his hands took wrath.  
But lately, when there smiting should have been,  
Who has a weapon seen ?  
The Spirit stands and looks on infamy,  
And unashamed the faces of the pit  
Snarl at their enemy,

Finding him wield no insupportable light  
And no whirled edge of blaze to hit  
Backward their impudence, and hammer them to  
flight ;

Although ready is he,  
Wearing the same righteous steel  
Upon his limbs, helmed as he was then  
When he made olden war ;  
Yet cannot now with foulness fiercely deal.  
There is no indignation among men,  
The Spirit has no scimeter.

## II.

Wilt thou not come again, thou godly sword,  
Into the Spirit's hands ?  
That he may be a captain of the Lord  
Again, and mow out of our lands  
The crop of wicked men.  
O thou forged anger, sword  
Made of the holy rage

That went out against the old sick fen  
Of being and on disorder warr'd  
And fought it into fire and white stars  
When God made Heavens out of the unwhole-  
some age

And maladies of existence, into good  
Hunting all that liked not to be glad,—  
In what armoury art thou now uplaid,  
And is the rust upon thy blade ?

These many years unhelped has stood  
The Spirit, weaponless against bad,  
Having no sharpness and no heat  
Of indignation wherewith to meet  
And battle with the vile banners, his great  
Beleaguerment of fiends. But to his hands  
Come thou and clear our lands.

Let him exult to feel the weight  
Of wrath swinging, with his arm abroad,  
And the air about him burn'd with a sword.  
Let there be fire, and the anger of the Lord.

### III.

The Mind of Man has been a sacred place,  
And into it the evil race  
Would trespass warily, much afraid  
Of sorely-felt assaults upon them made  
By statures of great wind that came  
Terribly using a huge flame  
Intolerably white.

But now that wrath comes never out to fight,  
The fiendish bands go lording in the day  
And openly possess the mind of man.  
With meaningless scurries of their insane feet  
They have rutted the helpless ground  
Like baggage-travell'd clay.  
And when the climate of man's thought they  
found  
Blue air, a road for immortal lights,—  
Days like the house of God, and hosted nights  
Held by the champions of eternity,—

With evil fires the swarms began  
To make a weather they could understand  
Of yellow dusk and smoky enormous bale  
To grieve over the land  
And make the sunlight fail.  
Till a low roof of dirty storm they brought  
To hang upon the mind of man :  
Who cannot see that man's huge thought  
Is now a dark calamity ?

IV.

But how long shall the Spirit see  
The Life of Man, wherein with such delight  
He walkt his glebe, and in his ways would sing  
To do his pleasant gardening,  
How long see his own especial ground  
Vext in a season of disastrous blight,  
Trampled and staled and trodden filthily  
By troops of insolence, the beasts of hell ?  
But the Spirit now is built up narrowly,



And kept within a shameful pound,  
Walled in with folly and stupid greed  
    Lest he should come to plead  
Against our ugly wickedness,  
Against our wanton dealing of distress,  
The forced defilement of humanity,  
    The foundries and the furnaces  
    That straddle over the human place.  
Nothing comes to rebuke us for  
The hearts we wound with laws grievously,  
    The souls our commerce clutches  
Cunningly into inescapable lime,  
Embruted in wicked streets, made debase  
    In villainous alleys and foul hutches,  
    There trapt in vice and crime,  
And for the wrong we did, who made them poor,  
Set to pay infamous penalties in gaols ;  
Not even for this the Spirit breaks his pales.  
And shall there be no end to life's expense  
In mills and yards and factories,

With no more recompense  
Than sleep in warrens and low styes,  
And undelighted food ?  
Shall still our ravenous and unhandsome mood  
Make men poor and keep them poor ?—  
Either to starve or work in deadly shops  
Where the damn'd wisdom of the wheels  
Fearfully fascinates men's wit and steals,  
With privy embezzlement that never stops,  
The worker's conscience into their spinning roar,—  
Until men are the dead stuff there,  
And the engines are aware ?  
Shall we not think of Beauty any more  
In our activities ?  
Or do no better than to God complain ?—  
I would that to the world would come again  
That indignation, that anger of the Lord,  
Which once was known among us men,  
For terrible and upright then  
The Spirit would stand suddenly out of his ways

Of crouching grief and tears,  
As by a hilt handling the wrathful blaze,  
Having again a sword.  
And he would ruin all the mischievous walls  
That had been raised up of materials  
Darkly quarried in hell, to hedge  
And fence him out of the life of man ;  
But he with anger's shining edge  
Would mightily cut the built iniquities,  
Commerce, and all the policies  
Of ownership and avarice ;  
And they would buckle at his stroke  
Perishing into flights of smoke.  
Then he with a dreadful song, a sound  
To put a howling fear in the bad horde,  
Would step again on his own ground,  
He and his indignant sword,  
And the golden havoc would begin.  
Those foul ghosts encamp't in man  
Would run from the stabbing light of his blade.

Caught in the anger's burning wheel,  
The huge scything of the tempered zeal,  
This clumsy unlit shed we have made,  
Money, to house our being in,  
Would travel like a wind-blown thing.  
In that fanning as motes would be,  
The sword-thresht fabric of our trade,  
Our happy greed, our healthy wrong,  
Our villainous prosperity.  
And ript out of its cursèd rind  
Of laidly duties, that did wring  
And clamp in ignominy man's whole mind,  
This iron scurf of labour torn away,  
Thought would walk again like a sacred king  
The shining space of immortality.  
O for that anger in the hands  
Of Spirit ! To us, O righteous sword,  
Come thou and clear our lands,  
O fire, O indignation of the Lord !

THE END

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